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Oman: Israeli policies block normalisation

MUSCAT (R) — Oman said on Monday Israel's current policies damaged previous rapprochement between the two states and ruled out normal ties with Arab countries. "If Israel continues with its current policies which contradict agreements with the Palestinians and deviate from the peace process...it will necessarily have a big impact on all past achievements between Oman and Israel," Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Yusef Ben Alawi said. Oman and Qatar have gone further than all other Gulf Arab states to establish ties with Israel, which has set up trade offices in both countries. But Oman said in early December that it had frozen ties with Israel. Qatar put its contacts with Israel on ice in September. "Israel cannot have normal relations with us or with other Arabs as long as it continues its occupation and settlement of Arab territory," Mr. Ben Alawi told reporters.

# Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation  
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية. الراي.

Mubarak: Peace process problems creating fear

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said on Monday that the stalemate in the Middle East peace process was creating fear in the region and that any changes to the Israeli-Palestinian accords would be dangerous. "The current situation is sad. There's a deadlock and that is creating fear," Mr. Mubarak said during a visit to an industrial region north of Cairo. "Israel must prove its flexibility. (I'm not saying that) to defend the Palestinians but to defend stability and peace in the region because peace is in everyone's interest — Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Syria and all the countries of the region," he said.

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AMMAN TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1996, SHAABAN 6, 1417

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Israeli businessmen to meet Palestinian official

TEL AVIV (R) — A group of Israeli business executives will on Tuesday meet the Palestinian industry and trade minister, Maner Al Masri, the Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce said on Monday. It is the first meeting of its kind since the elections, and it is occurring despite the events of last week and the closure of the territories. Federation Chairman Danny Gitterman told Reuters, Tuesday's meeting will take place at the ministry in the West Bank town of Ramallah. The two sides have held talks from time to time, but this will be their first meeting since the election of the right-wing government headed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

7 children die in Egypt house collapse

CAIRO (R) — A house owner lost all his seven children, aged between 14 and five, plus his mother when their house collapsed in south Egypt on Monday, security sources said. The owner, Abdul Hamid Hussein Abdul Ghaffar, was unhurt but his wife was seriously injured, the sources said. The two-storey house collapsed after a wall from the adjacent building fell on it in a town in the province of Ben Suef, some 100 kilometres south of Cairo, they added. Cairo has been plagued with buildings collapsing either because of age or technical faults. The authorities recently started campaigns against violations in the construction sector in an attempt to save lives.

Israeli dies 2 years after blast

HAIFA (AFP) — A 20-year-old Israeli soldier died Monday as a result of wounds suffered nearly two years ago in a double suicide bombing by the Islamic Jihad movement, the army announced. Corporal Assaf Ben-Or had been in a coma at Haifa's Horev Hospital since the Jan. 22, 1995, attack by two Palestinian militants near an army barracks north of Tel Aviv. His death brought the number killed in the attack to 22, 21 of them soldiers.

Christopher opens meeting on Lebanon

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Secretary of State Warren Christopher on Monday opened a meeting of the Friends of Lebanon by calling for the country to return to its "traditional role as a dynamic trading centre for the entire region." Speaking at the meeting began, Mr. Christopher said a lasting peace would not come to the region unless "Lebanon and its neighbours make economic progress...in peaceful conditions." About 30 countries as well as several international financial organisations are taking part in the meeting here.

Foa quits as U.N. spokeswoman

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Sylvana Foa, the tough-talking spokeswoman of U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali, announced Monday that she was stepping down following the selection of Kofi Annan as the next U.N. chief. Ms. Foa, who had been on a one-year secondment from the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees until the end of this year, told a news briefing here that she planned to take 12 months' unpaid leave from Jan. 1. Her successor as U.N. spokesperson has not been confirmed, but the name of Fred Eckhard, a former spokesman for international mediators for the former Yugoslavia Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance, is circulating here as a possible replacement.

## Jordan hosts unprecedented conference of Arab political parties

# King: Democracy, respect for human rights only alternative to frustration, oppression and chaos in Arab World

HM urges political parties to make programmes and policies compatible with needs of era

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein on Monday called for democracy and respect for human rights in the Arab World as the only alternative to frustration, oppression and chaos where everyone will be the loser. The King, addressing an unprecedented meeting of political parties in the Arab World, also called on Arab parties to reassess their programmes and policies so as to raise their levels to be compatible with the requirements of change in the region and the international scene. "There is no alternative to democracy in our societies at this crucial time in our history," the King said. The only alternatives to democracy are frustration, oppression and chaos, which would lead to civil wars in which all are losers. "If some Arab parties succeeded at first in mobilising the masses for independence... they failed afterward to maintain their popularity because they took away their members' freedom," he said. "These parties forgot that no authority in the world can ignore human rights today. Instead, they should draw their inspiration from it," he said. The King cited Jordan's democratic experience as a model for others in the region. The King called on the parties participating in the conference to adapt their agendas to political changes ahead, including an imminent peace settlement between the Arabs and Israel. "It may be high time for the Arab parties, singly or collectively, to review their progress, programmes, plans and methods to make them compatible with the new phase of our nation's history," the King said. Following is the full text of the King's address: I AM extremely happy to extend to you the warmest welcome, in this Arab bustle, which was, and will stay, God willing, a haven for the free and the intellectuals of our nation, and a secure and dignified refuge to whoever among them seeks shelter in this country, that will always be faithful to its Arab identity regardless of the cost, secure in the purity of its principles and the nobility of its objectives, always striving for the freedom of the nation, its unity, and for a better life for its sons. Today you converge on Jordan from all countries of our great nation, to represent all political tendencies in it, and to convene the first conference of Arab political parties. You are all

welcome, in your country, Jordan, brothers within your family and honoured guests worthy of the greatest hospitality and consideration. Holding this conference on this blessed land is an indication of the noble feelings that you bear in your righteous and alert conscience towards this country. It manifests your conviction in its true commitment to its nation, and your appreciation of its democratic process, which opens new horizons for freedom, plurality, and respect for human rights. This will permit you, God willing, to discuss the items on your agenda in complete clarity, and freedom, that befits your virtuous objectives, and the noble ambitions that you hope to realise, chief among them, Arab solidarity and common popular action. The experience of political parties in all countries of the great Arab nation was subjected to severe tests, and underwent many reversals and much frustration. If this times, this caused parties, to lose the clarity of their vision, and for a large part of their credibility and value, in the eyes of the Arab masses, that had pinned great hopes on these parties, and that had seen in them the way for salvation

Amman forum seen as opportunity to advance efforts for Arab solidarity and interaction among political activists

By Christina Schlegl  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Representatives of dozens of Arab political parties, in and out of power, opened an unprecedented conference here on Monday vowing to make their meeting a major step towards restoring Arab solidarity and unity of purpose. His Majesty King Hussein opened the three-day conference stressing the need to enhance collective Arab action as well as democracy, pluralism and human rights in Arab countries (see separate story). Suleiman Arar, secretary-general of the Jordanian Al Mustaqbal party which organised the conference, thanked the King for hosting the gathering and expressed hopes that conference will succeed in achieving a unified formula for future Arab action. Mr. Arar, a former deputy prime minister, regretted that the situation in some Arab countries was distressing while others in the world had made their plans and secured the future of their peoples for the next century. Only legal and licensed parties, 40 from Arab countries and 20 parties from

(Continued on page 7)



His Majesty King Hussein on Monday greets delegates attending a conference of Arab political parties in Amman (Photo by Yusef Allan)

Jordan, were invited to the gathering being held at Philadelphia Hotel. Illegal parties were not invited to avoid friction, organisers said. It is likely that the issue of freedoms and human rights spark heated discussions among conferees but the King warned in his inaugural speech against appalling consequences if the same conditions of despotism and suppression continue to dominate the Arab atmosphere.

The King, who had personally approved the holding of the conference in Amman, stressed Jordan's consistent pursuit of and belief in collective Arab action. Participants agreed that convening a meeting of political parties from all Arab countries for the first time was a much-needed development. Delegates said it was high time for Arab states to have a unified stand, especially vis-a-vis the

Arab-Israeli peace process. They called for intensified pressure on Israel to fulfill the agreements that it has signed with the Arabs in the six-year old peace process. "It is now 'peace for peace' instead of 'peace for land'. The peace process is in danger, and we have the right to defend the Arab Nation," Secretary General of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) Ishaq Ahmad Al

(Continued on page 7)

## King, Tunisian premier discuss Arab issues, peace process and bilateral ties

### Jordanian-Tunisian committee opens meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Monday reviewed with Tunisian Prime Minister Hamid Al Karoui, the latest developments of the Middle East peace process and Jordan's efforts to remove all obstacles in the way to a comprehensive and just peace in the region. Mr. Karoui voiced Tunisia's appreciation of

King Hussein's efforts to establish a just and durable peace in the region. King Hussein and the Tunisian premier also reviewed Pan-Arab affairs, and efforts to bolster Jordanian-Tunisian relations and cooperation in all fields. Dr. Karoui conveyed to the King greetings from the Tunisian president and people expressing hope for strengthened relations between the two countries.

Attending the meeting were Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh. His Royal Highness Prince Hamzeh, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Khaleel Madadiah and Jordan's ambassador to Tunisia Haidur Mahmoud.

On the Tunisian side the meeting was attended by the official delegation accompanying Mr. Karoui on his visit to Jordan to attend a meeting of the Joint Jordanian-Tunisian Higher Committee. The committee, co-chaired by the prime ministers of the two countries.

(Continued on page 7)

## Netanyahu informs King on status of negotiations

### David Levy expected here on Thursday

By P.V. Vivekanand  
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein on Monday had a telephone conversation with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the latest developments in the Israeli-Palestinian track of negotiations ahead of a visit by the Israeli foreign minister. The Jordanian-Israeli contact came amid serious differences between the two countries over the snags facing the Middle East peace process following the emergence to power of the Netanyahu-led right-wing in Israel in May elections. The problems have mainly stemmed from actions and statements from Mr. Netanyahu ruling out a land-for-peace settlement with the Arabs and indicating serious deviations from the agreements signed by the previous Labour government in Israel. Jordan has strongly criticised the hardline policies of the Netanyahu government and demanded that it remain committed to and fulfill the agreements its predecessor signed with the Palestinians. The Jordan News Agency,

Petra, said that during the telephone conversation, initiated by Mr. Netanyahu, the King reiterated Jordan's "keen interest in continued efforts to give impetus to the Middle East peace process." "There is a need for all parties to exert all possible efforts for the resumption of negotiations as soon as possible," Petra quoted the King as telling Mr. Netanyahu. Both Petra and Israeli media said Mr. Netanyahu sought to reassure the King of his country's desire to pursue the peace process and briefed the Monarch on his latest contacts with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat (see separate story). "Israel is continuing its efforts in order to advance the peace process with the Palestinians and (Netanyahu) hopes that the efforts will bear fruit," a statement issued by the Israeli prime ministry quoted Mr. Netanyahu as telling the King. The head of the Jordanian representative office in the Gaza Strip, Ziad Al Majali, met with Mr. Arafat on Sunday and briefed him on the outcome of Information Minister Marwan Muasher's talks with Israeli lead-

ers on the peace process last week, Petra said. Mr. Arafat also briefed Mr. Majali on the contacts between himself and Mr. Netanyahu and the subjects he discussed with two envoys sent by the Israeli prime minister, Petra added. Mr. Netanyahu's telephone call to the King came three days ahead of a visit to Jordan by Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy in response to an invitation extended by Dr. Muasher during his visit to Israel last week. Israeli embassy spokesman Shalom Touregman said Mr. Levy will discuss "all bilateral issues with the Jordanian leadership," and explain his country's policy on Jewish settlements in the occupied territories and the Middle East peace process in general. Jordan has severely criticised the policy, describing it as posing a threat not only to the Middle East peace process and Palestinian rights but also to the security and stability of the Kingdom. Dr. Muasher delivered a "strong" message to Mr. Netanyahu in this regard

(Continued on page 7)

## Israel-PLO talks back on track despite tension after Netanyahu-Arafat contacts

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Israel and the Palestinians have decided to resume peace talks despite tensions over Israel's decision to pump large sums of money into Jewish settlements in the West Bank, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat said Monday. Mr. Arafat's statement came after he spoke by telephone to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday night and met with a Netanyahu adviser at his Gaza City headquarters. Mr. Arafat's conciliatory tone suggested that the two sides were moving back from a confrontation that

appeared inevitable after the Israeli cabinet voted Friday to grant benefits worth tens, if not hundreds of millions of dollars, to Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The subsidies will lure more Israelis to the occupied lands where the Palestinians hope to set up an independent state. Some 145,000 settlers now live amid two million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Mr. Arafat's cabinet denounced Israel's decision as a declaration of war on the peace process and

THE WHITE HOUSE had sharp words Monday for Israel's decision to offer financial incentives to encourage Jewish settlements in Palestinian territories, suggesting a "new" U.S. position on the issue. "We believe the settlements are a complicating factor in the negotiations. We also believe that it is troubling to see the sides bringing up issues that are under discussion by taking positions," spokesman Michael McCurry said. Mr. McCurry declined to say whether the United States believes the settlements are illegal, but pointedly noted that his remarks reiterated comments from the State Department Friday and signalled a "new" message in a highly "nuanced matter."

He said President Bill Clinton had not called Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu nor had any other high-level contacts on the matter but was following the situation closely. "We believe that the parties should continue diligently to address their differences. We believe they are very close to an agreement on Hebron," he said.

(Continued on page 7)



## 1,000 Palestinian students protest closure of Islamic University in Hebron

HEBRON (Agencies) — Some 1,000 Palestinian students marched in downtown Hebron on Monday, demanding that the Israeli army lift its 10-month closure of the city's Islamic University.

Students chanted "Let's free our books from the siege," and "Allahu akbar." Israeli troops kept their distance, and the protesters also avoided confrontation by staying away from heavily guarded Jewish settler enclaves.

The Islamic University and several other West Bank colleges were closed by the Israeli military after the bombings in February and March. Under the closure order, studies at the Islamic University are to resume in March 1997.

Last week, about 200 students held a sit-in last week at the Islamic University. Students said the protest ended after the

army agreed to open the Hebron polytechnic and to hold talks on reopening the Islamic University. The army denied there was any deal.

Two buildings of the Hebron polytechnic were opened Sunday, and the rest of the campus will be opened in stages, the Israeli army said.

The students, who have been holding daily sit-ins outside the university campus for the past week, took their movement to the streets Monday by marching to the city centre accompanied by a heavy Israeli army presence.

The marchers carried banners proclaiming "Restore academic freedom" and "the closure should be for Bar-Ilan," a reference to the Israeli university where the right-wing Jewish extremist Yigal Amir studied until

he murdered Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin a year ago.

Last week hundreds of students broke into the Hebron University campus and a tense standoff with Israeli soldiers only ended after the Palestinians said they had received a promise that the school and a polytechnic institute would be reopened.

Army officials subsequently denied making any promises, but Israel on Sunday announced that classes were being allowed to resume in two polytechnic buildings. But there has been no decision announced concerning Hebron University, which has some 1,700 students.

Hebron is considered a stronghold of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) which carried out three of the bombings.



**DEMAND FOR PRISONER RELEASE:** A group of Palestinians, holding portraits of their sons, chant during a protest in the self-rule Gaza Strip on Monday demanding the release of their sons who are held as political prisoners. There are more than 7,000 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails (Reuters photo)

## Albright faces rumours, unease in Arab World

WASHINGTON (AP) — The rumour races through the streets of the Arab World: Madeleine Albright is Jewish. It is accepted regardless of the fact that President Bill Clinton's choice for secretary of state was born a Catholic and is now an episcopalian.

The religion rumour is one more sign of what lies ahead as Ms. Albright takes up the task of trying to breathe new life into the Middle East peace process. At the same time, authorities in the region do not think she will have difficulty because of who she is.

In the case of the rumour, who she is not.

"Any secretary of state would have a hard time simply because of the issues," said Richard Haass, who was director of the national security council during the Bush administration. "The peace process is in real danger of unraveling and our policies both toward Iran and Iraq are coming under pressure."

Edward Djerejian, who served as U.S. ambassador to Syria and later to Israel, said the rumours reflect the fact the Middle East peace process is at a standstill.

"Therefore, worst-case scenarios and conspiracy theories are coming to the fore," he said.

"What I think you're seeing is simply an expression of Arab frustration over

U.S. Middle East policy," said Mr. Haass.

Ms. Albright was never seen as a friend of the Arab cause and it was only a short step for extremists in the Middle East to take up the cry that she was not only a supporter of Israel but Jewish as well.

As ambassador to the United Nations, Ms. Albright blocked Arab efforts to push the Security Council to condemn Israel for the shelling of a U.N. base in South Lebanon that killed at least 102 civilians. She also vetoed a resolution declaring invalid Israel's expropriation of Arab-owned land in East Jerusalem.

"The appointment of Albright will virtually make Tel Aviv the capital of the United States, and not Washington," columnist Mustafa Amin wrote in the Egyptian newspaper Al Sharq Al Awwal.

Fuelling the unease was the fact that the same day President Bill Clinton named Ms. Albright to be secretary of state, he announced that Senator William Cohen was his choice for Defence Secretary. Mr. Cohen's father was Jewish, but the senator was raised a unitarian.

"What is of high concern for us is that the new appointees are people who are well-known for their allegiance and connections with the Zionist lobby,"

said a commentator in the Islamic-oriented Cairo newspaper Al Shaab.

Given the perception of Ms. Albright as pro-Israel, what sort of reception is she likely to receive when she travels to Damascus as secretary of state to meet with Syrian President Hafez Al Assad?

"I think Assad will receive her officially and well," said Mr. Djerejian, who recently met with Mr. Assad during a trip to the Middle East. "The Syrians are very professional" in this. They deal with the people in power.

Mr. Djerejian, who directs the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University, also met separately with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on the same trip.

Neither Mr. Djerejian nor Mr. Haass thought the fact that Ms. Albright is a woman would be a problem for her in Middle East diplomacy.

"You have to remember that in the Islamic World there have been people like Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, and, of course, they have dealt with American officials who are women in other capacities," said Mr. Djerejian. "So I don't think it should be overblown."

## Israel to close 10 embassies

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel plans to shut down 10 of its diplomatic missions abroad next year in a cost-cutting drive, with candidates for closure including consulates in China and the United States and embassies in Asia and Latin America, officials said Monday.

"Our ministry must save \$13.5 million, or five per cent of its budget, and this will be done notably by cutting costs in information and cultural activities and closing 10 embassies or diplomatic missions," said Yigal Palmor, a foreign ministry spokesman.

Mr. Palmor would not comment on which missions might get the chop, but a senior ministry official said privately that a shortlist of 16 offices had been drawn up including embassies in Angola, Belarus, Bolivia, Burma, the Dominican Republic, Georgia, Nepal, New Zealand, Panama and Paraguay.

Possible consular targets for closure were in the U.S. cities of San Francisco and Philadelphia and in Shanghai, the official said.

The officials did not say when they expected a final decision on the closures.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has submitted a draft 1997 budget calling for \$2.1 billion in savings compared to 1996 and last week ordered his ministries to come up with specific cost-cutting proposals.

## Qadhafi accuses U.S. of hegemony aimed at controlling world markets

AMMAN (J.T.) — Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi has criticised the United States for its "hegemony" over the world following the fall of the Soviet Union, stating that the U.S. had become the "policeman of the world" in its attempt to impose American products on world markets.

In a direct challenge to the United States, Colonel Qadhafi called for an "intellectual debate" between the "capitalist theory based on exploitation" and the Jamahiriya theory based on the rule of the people by the people. He offered this as an alternative to embargoes and force, asserting that the future would favour the "international theory."

In two exclusive live interviews given to Orbit TV on Saturday and Sunday, Col. Qadhafi spoke at great length on a number of issues affecting the Arab World and the international community as a whole.

These special editions of Ala Al Hawa, hosted by Imadeddine Aadeh, were broadcast live from Tripoli exclusively on the Orbit network.

During the interviews, Col. Qadhafi shared his thoughts with viewers and callers on his "international Jamahiriya theory," the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Palestinian refugees on the Libyan/Egyptian border, the failure of attempts at Arab unity, and the United Nations embargo imposed

on Libya following the bombing of the Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland.

With regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Col. Qadhafi stated that "Zionist plans" had not changed and Israel was seeking to create a Zionist homeland extending from the Euphrates to the Nile, and is not truly interested in peace. The colonel also criticised Arab submission to Israel following the death of Jamal Abdul Nasser, and called upon them to uphold their rights, despite their weakness.

In response to queries put forward by several viewers regarding the deportation of Palestinians to the border between Libya and Egypt, Col. Qadhafi stated that the objective of this action had been to draw the world's attention to the unresolved problem of the Palestinians.

Asked what the solution to the Palestinian question might be, he called for a democratic election and the creation of a single democratic state in the territories of Israel and Palestine.

While lamenting the Arab World's failure to achieve any real unity to date, Col. Qadhafi expressed his belief that such unity was "feasible." He called for the formation of a council composed of the heads of all Arab states with a rotating presidency, explaining that such a move would enable the Arab World to oblige the U.S. and the

international community to choose between Israel and the Arab World. He also later asserted that he would not be dismayed if one Arab country were to take over the whole of the Arab World — for the sake of unity.

Col. Qadhafi warned of Israel's plans to strike at Syria and Egypt, claiming these two countries were the real target of the blockade imposed on Libya. Sudan and Iraq. The colonel reinforced his point with the use of coloured maps brought with him to the interview. He stated the embargo not only harmed Libya's interests but also those of other countries as well as U.S. and European companies.

Col. Qadhafi asserted he would be prepared to try the individuals accused in connection with the Pan Am bombing in Libya or elsewhere, but that he would not hand them over to the U.K. or the U.S.

During the course of the two interviews, thousands of calls and faxes were received with questions for Col. Qadhafi, who responded without hesitation in this unprecedented opportunity for the Arab World to speak with one of its most renowned figures.

Col. Qadhafi ended the interview expressing his gratitude to Orbit and stating his hope that he had "clarified the truth for the Arab Nation."

## Bahrain vows to defend 'national' territory

BAHRAIN (Agencies) — The emir, in an apparent reference to the bitter territorial dispute with Qatar, vowed Monday to defend Bahrain's borders.

Sheikh Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa was addressing his small country on its 25th national day.

"No part of the country will be given away, or be up for bargaining," the emir said. He vowed that "Bahrain will continue to defend the unity of its national soil ... by all legitimate means."

Bahrain and Qatar, both members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), claim sovereignty over a chain of islands and the Zubara strip of land in Qatar that has historical significance for Bahrain's ruling family.

The dispute dates to the late 1930s. Qatar has asked the International Court of Justice to rule, but Bahrain wants a solution brokered by the GCC, a political alliance that groups the two countries with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

The row has escalated this month when Bahrain boycotted a GCC summit hosted by Qatar, and put two Qatari citizens on trial for spying.

Sheikh Isa called on the GCC to "activate its role and clear up relations between its sister members."

Sheikh Isa also said his country "will pursue cooperation with other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council to achieve the hopes of our people and safeguard the region's stability."

Bahrain Defense Minister Sheikh Khalifa Ben Ahmad Al Khalifa said Thursday that his country was ready to defend every inch of its territory.

Information Minister Mohammad Ibrahim Al Mutawa said Thursday that his country was determined to avert an escalation with Qatar and voiced surprise at Doha's travel advisory for Bahrain.

In an unprecedented appeal, Doha warned its citizens last week to take precautions when travelling to Bahrain following the arrests there of two Qataris on spying charges. Manama on Dec. 2 announced the arrests of Fahd Abdullah Al Bakker, alleged to be a Qatari intelligence officer, and Salwa Jassim Mahmud Fakhri, a woman he allegedly recruited as a spy.

Fakhri allegedly visited the Hawar islands to spy on military installations there, Qatar denies all charges.

The emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani sent congratulations to Sheikh Isa on Bahrain's national day, according to Qatar's official news agency.

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Tel. 773111-19	
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14:20	Captain Planet
14:40	Comedy — I Love Lucy
15:00	Sciences Cartoon
15:15	Magazine — Montaigne
16:00	At The Zoo
16:30	Documentary
17:00	News Flash
17:02	Fun With Physics
17:15	Drama — Cyclone Tracy
18:00	Series — La Lumiere des Juries
19:00	Le Journal
19:15	Magazine — Extra Large
19:30	News Headlines
19:35	Murphy Brown
20:00	Magazine — Zero One
20:30	Encounter
21:10	Doc. — Lost Civilization
22:00	News in English
22:25	China Beach
23:15	Mission Impossible
23:59	Are You Being Served?
PRAYER TIMES	
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06:24	(Sunrise) Duha
11:31	Dhuhr
14:15	Asr
16:38	Maghreb
18:01	Isha
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweith, Tel. 810740	
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.	
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Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366	
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.	
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St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.	
Armenian International Church Tel. 652526	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.	
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457	
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.	
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.	
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295	
English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.	
WEATHER	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology	
Scattered showers are expected in the northern and central parts of the Kingdom in particular with skies cloudy to partly	

## JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

cloudy. On Wednesday, temperatures are expected to rise, winds becoming southeasterly moderate and skies partly cloudy to sunny. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Amman ..... 08/13  
Aqaba ..... 11/23  
Deserts ..... 07/16  
Jordan Valley ..... 12/20

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 13, Aqaba 23 Humidity readings: Amman 75 per cent, Aqaba 30 per cent.

**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

**NIGHT DUTY**  
AMMAN:  
Dr. Ghaleb Zawaideh ..... 736011  
Dr. Bilal Al Sayid ..... 890280  
Dr. Hisham Kan'an ..... 790286  
Dr. Khaloud Asfour ..... 666873  
Ferdows pharmacy ..... 778336  
Al Asena pharmacy ..... 637055  
Al Salam pharmacy ..... 636730  
Yacoub pharmacy ..... 644945  
Shmeisani pharmacy ..... 637660  
Nalroukh pharmacy ..... 623672  
Najib pharmacy ..... 847632  
IRBID:  
Dr. Ghazi Ta'anneh ..... 250080  
Al Quds pharmacy ..... (—)  
ZARQA:

Dr. Akram Haddad ..... 985550  
Khalifeh pharmacy ..... 985417  
**EMERGENCIES**  
Food Control Centre ..... 637111  
Civil Defence Centre ..... 661111  
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue ..... 630341  
Civil Defence Emergency ..... 199  
Rescue Police 192 ..... 621111  
637777  
Fire Brigade ..... 617101  
Blood Bank ..... 775121  
Highway Police ..... 843402  
Traffic Police ..... 896390  
Public Security Department ..... 630321  
Hotel Complaints ..... 605800  
Price Complaints ..... 661176  
Water and Sewerage Complaints ..... 897467  
Amman Municipality Complaints ..... 787111  
Telephone Information (directory assistance) ..... 121  
Overseas Calls ..... 010230  
Central Amman Telephone Repairs ..... 623101  
Abdali Telephone Repairs ..... 661101  
Jordan Television ..... 773111  
Radio Jordan ..... 774111  
Water Authority ..... 680100  
Jordan Electricity Authority ..... 815615  
Electric Power Company ..... 636381  
RJ Flight Information ..... 0853200

Queen Alia Int'l Airport 08-53200  
**HOSPITALS**  
AMMAN:  
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32  
Khalidi Maternity ..... 644281/6  
Akileh Maternity ..... 642441/2  
Jabal Amman Maternity ..... 642362  
Malhas, J. Amman ..... 636140  
Palestine, Shmeisani ..... 607071  
Shmeisani Hospital ..... 669131  
University Hospital ..... 845845  
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9  
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37  
Al-Ahli, Abdali ..... 664164/6  
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 77101/3  
Al-Bashir ..... 775111/26  
Army, Marka ..... 891611/5  
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50  
Amal Hospital ..... 674155  
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery ..... 865199  
ZARQA:  
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323  
Zarqa National Hospital ..... (09)900560  
Jbn Sina Hospital (09)986732  
Al Hikma Modern Hospital ..... (09)990990  
IRBID:  
Princess Basma Hospital ..... 1021275555  
Greek Catholic Hospital ..... 1021272275

**FOR THE TRAVELLER**  
**QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT**  
**ARRIVALS**  
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights  
07:00 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
07:15 ..... Sanaa (RJ)  
07:25 ..... Damascus (RJ)  
09:05 ..... Abu Dhabi (RJ)  
10:25 ..... Muscat, Dubai (RJ)  
10:45 ..... Beirut (RJ)  
10:15 ..... Doha, Bahrain (RJ)  
15:55 ..... London (RJ)  
16:20 ..... Cairo (RJ)  
16:30 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)  
17:15 Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)  
20:20 ..... Jakarta (add) (RJ)  
00:45 Kuala Lumpur (add) (RJ)  
05:00 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
**Other Flights**  
07:30 ..... London (KJ)  
07:35 ..... Damascus, London (BA)  
11:30 ..... Cairo (MS)  
15:00 ..... Kiev (RU)  
15:45 ..... Munich (YP)  
17:40 ..... Rome (AZ)  
19:15 ..... Dubai (EK)  
22:50 ..... Tel Aviv (LY)  
00:40 ..... Beirut, Amsterdam (KL)  
01:00 ..... Aden (TY)  
01:55 ..... Bucharest (RO)  
07:45 ..... Beirut (ME)  
Royal Wings (RW) Flights

**DEPARTURES**  
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights  
06:20 ..... Beirut (RJ)  
08:30 ..... Amsterdam, New York (RJ)  
09:00 ..... Abu Dhabi, Singapore (add) (RJ)  
11:05 ..... Amsterdam, Montreal, Toronto (RJ)  
11:15 ..... Vienna, Brussels (RJ)  
12:00 ..... Geneva, Madrid (RJ)  
12:10 ..... Paris (RJ)  
12:15 ..... London (RJ)  
12:30 ..... Cairo (RJ)  
20:20 ..... Larnaca (RJ)  
20:30 ..... Jeddah (RJ)  
20:40 ..... Damascus (RJ)  
21:00 ..... Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)  
22:00 ..... Kuala Lumpur, Singapore (RJ)  
23:00 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
03:00 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)  
**Other Flights**  
05:05 ..... London (KJ)  
11:35 ..... Cairo (MS)  
13:50 ..... Kiev (RU)  
14:05 ..... Munich (YP)  
16:30 ..... Rome (AZ)  
18:15 ..... Dubai, Damascus (EK)  
20:10 ..... Beirut (ME)  
21:40 ..... Tel Aviv (LY)  
23:40 ..... Amsterdam (KL)  
23:59 ..... Aden (TY)  
00:55 ..... Bucharest (RO)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights	
09:50	Aqaba (RW)
17:15	Tel Aviv (RW)
20:20	Aqaba (RW)
HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN	
Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday	
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday	
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday	
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday	
MARKET PRICES	
Upper/lower price in fils per kg.	
Apple	700/500
Banana	550/550
Banana (imported)	850/600
Cabbage	70/50
Carrot	300/150
Cauliflower	150/100
Cucumber (large)	120/80
Cucumber (small)	280/180
Eggplant	150/80
Garlic	850/600
Grapes	550/400
Grape fruit	150/100
Lemon	380/250
Marrow (large)	80/40
Marrow (small)	160/100
Onion (green)	180/120
Onion (dry)	170/80
Orange	580/400
Pepper (hot)	280/160
Pepper (sweet)	280/160
Potato	150/100
Spinach	130/90
String Bean	400/300
Tomato	160/120



# Home News

Jordan Times, Tuesday, December 17, 1996

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HRH Princess Basma Monday receives a delegation representing the Women's Executive Committee of the Islamic Action Front (Petra photo)

## Princess receives IAF women's delegation

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Princess Basma yesterday received a delegation representing the Women's Executive Committee of the Islamic Action Front (IAF), according to a statement released by the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development.

During the meeting, the Princess emphasised the importance of cooperation between all groups concerned with women's issues in order to boost the status of women in Jordan, while affirming that the role of women is essential both in the society and in family preservation.

She also asserted the importance of cooperation between the Jordanian National Committee for Women (JNCW) and the Women's Executive Committee of the Islamic Action Front, the statement said.

The Princess stated that family protection is included in Islamic principles, culture and history, which, she maintained, are worthy of pride.

The IAF delegation commended Princess Basma's efforts which, they opined, have led to great achievements for Jordanian women.

They were particularly referring to a recent decision by the Civil Status and Passports Department (CSPD) allowing widows, divorced women, and Jordanian wives of foreign nationals to obtain separate family registration books, which, they said, have enabled women to overcome many obstacles.

The delegation reviewed IAF programmes and activities to boost the role of women in all fields and their political participation while adhering to tenets of Islamic Sharia and the perspective of a comprehensive national development.

The main principles of the Jordanian National Strategy for Women were also reviewed during the meeting, the statement said.

The IAF delegation stated their hopes for further meetings with JNCW to formulate programmes and plans for a strengthened future cooperation.

Director of the General Secretariat of JNCW Hiam Kalimat attended the meeting.

Also Monday Princess Basma received a delegation representing the Lions Club of Wadi Rum. The club has donated 30,000 eye glasses to the Queen Alia Fund (QAF) for Social Development for distribution among the indigent.

She expressed appreciation for this initiative by the Lions Club.

The delegation commended the fund's efforts in elevating social developments for the Kingdom, especially for underprivileged groups.

The meeting was attended by QAF Executive Director Awni Bushir.

## Seminar to cover media role in population issues

AMMAN (Petra) — The role of the media and communications in implementing a national Jordanian strategy on population and development is the theme of a seminar opening today.

A total of 52 delegates representing private and public sector media organisations in Jordan are participating in the conference.

The Ministry of Information has stated that the symposium is designated in part to reach a common formula for promoting popular participation in housing and development programmes.

The two-day meeting, slated to be opened by Minister of Information Marwan Muasher, is to review several reports dealing with the Kingdom's population in the context of a general 1994 census as well as the impact of rapid population growth on development, production, services and natural resources.

Other categories of debate to be included in the conference are televised educational programmes, media-based family planning projects, the participation of voluntary groups and non-governmental organisations in implementing a national strategy on population and development and the role of the legislative authority in backing a media strategy. The meeting has been organised in conjunction with the UN Fund for Human Settlements (Habitat).

Hani Farhan, a delegate representing the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation, explained that the meeting was deemed necessary in view of rapid population growth stemming from improved health services, vaccination against contagious diseases, a drop in maternal and infant mortality rates and Palestinian as well as other returning expatriate migrations.

He warned that if the rapid population growth issue is not immediately addressed serious consequences might ensue as large populations tend to adverse effects on national economies and can threaten national development strategies.

## Political development depress RJ performance, improvement expected next year, says Dahabi

By Ghaila Alul  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Political tension in the region and the stalemate in the peace process negatively affected the performance of the Royal Jordanian (RJ) during the second half of 1996, RJ Chief Executive Officer Nader Dahabi Monday told the 33rd annual market conference which coincided with the anniversary of the national carrier.

"During the past year we have witnessed a series of (political) events that directly affected our performance," Mr. Dahabi said in his inaugural speech.

He added that "events started with explosions in Tel Aviv and Ashkelon in February and March, followed by the heavy bombardment in South Lebanon in April, the Israeli elections in May and subsequent changes in the political mood... Influence of these events resulted in the cancellation of business, holiday and religious trips to our region."

Mr. Dahabi said that Iraq's oil for food deal with the UN will decrease international oil prices and thus positively affecting the airline.

However, he added this month RJ witnessed a tangible increase in the passenger load by 30-40 per cent.

"This is a very good indication that we entered an era much better than the one in the past years," he told journalists in a press conference.

Mr. Dahabi reviewed the airline's financial performance and said that part of its efforts to ease its debt burden, RJ intends to capitalise debts of the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company, which will increase the capital of RJ to \$200 million.

To help it reduce its \$650 million debts as well as its cash strains, RJ plans to sell its Tri Star aircraft and lease it which will provide cash of \$40 million.

RJ is also planning to do the same with its A310 aircraft to raise about \$24 million.

The RJ privatisation process, Mr. Dahabi said will take three years.

A report in the daily Al Aswaj quoted Minister of Transport Nasser Lawzi as saying that Saudi Prince Walid Bin Talal has expressed interest in investing \$100 million in the capital of RJ after the restructuring of the company as a first step towards privatisation.

In this regard, Mr. Dahabi said that the company had not yet accepted any investments. This will be done, he added, when clear plans and procedures are set for privatisation which will reduce the airline's debts by about \$360 million.

Mr. Dahabi said that RJ will restructure its staff by reviewing the existing structure together with qualifications, job description, job evaluation, cadre, salary scale and new appraisal system.

"The objective was to build the new structure on functions and process and to have the right number of people with the appropriate skills in the right place at the necessary time," said Mr. Dahabi, adding that new structure will reduce the number of managerial positions.

Reviewing the airline's plans for 1997, Mr. Dahabi said the aircraft will fly 3.1 per cent more hours than in 1996. Total capacity, he added, is planned to increase by 3.9 per cent in 1997 over 1996 including new routes and additional frequencies.

He said that the airlines has to keep the projected seat factor at about 70.7 per cent and load factor to about 60 per cent. "It is not the break even point, but I am sure that we have adequate traffic potential in our market to justify it, provided we do not let the competition get away with it."

Therefore, Mr. Dahabi

added, a growth of 11.7 per cent in passenger traffic target and 10.9 per cent in excess baggage, 11.3 per cent in cargo and 10.2 per cent in mail have been earmarked for 1997.

"I am confident that these are achievable figures considering the new routes and the additional frequencies as well as the expected upsurge of tourist, business and projected traffic to Jordan," Mr. Dahabi said.

He said that RJ is committed to positive change in order to increase its efficiency and produce better results.

Despite the adverse conditions, he added, RJ is committed to maintaining safe operations and high product standards in 1996.

He said that a new safety board was formed to review, modify and standardise procedures in order to reduce the likelihood of safety violations.

RJ plans to increase customer satisfaction. "Success is the reward of airlines which can bring about rapid productivity gains without cutting back on the all-important service levels," he said.

The opening of the Amman City Terminal this year has provided RJ passengers with a "covenant alternative that would improve their satisfaction."

The introduction of the advanced boarding pass service in local sales offices, was another service launched this year, Mr. Dahabi said.

Inflight meals, he added, were reviewed during the year to improve quality and delivery.

RJ has also introduced a new business class service (Alia) on long haul routes to North America, Far East and Indian sub-continent, Mr. Dahabi said.

"This service has replaced the present first class service offered on those routes. First class seats and service will be maintained while applying business class fares," he added.

A professional team has recently conducted a service audit on several RJ flights. This activities checked included reservation, ticket sale, check-in, boarding, meals and cleanliness, Mr. Dahabi said.

He added that a task force was formed to evaluate the findings and the recommendations of this study.

Mr. Dahabi concluded that "our biggest challenges next year are to increase seat and load factors and to reduce unit cost while at the same time improve our yields."

## Conference calls for amending penal code

By Rana Hussein  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Participants at a three-day workshop entitled "Women in Penal Legislation," Monday called for the cancellation and/or amendments of several articles in the Penal and Civil Laws which, they said, were "unjust and discriminate against women."

"We consider any law, which discriminates against or violates women's rights, unconstitutional and as violating the United Nation's December Declaration which called for ending all forms of violence against women," the participants said in their recommendations.

The recommendations, released on Monday, called for the cancellation of article 340 in the Jordanian Penal Code (no 16, 1990).

One paragraph states: "He who discovers his wife or a female relative committing adultery and kills, wounds, or injures one or both of them, is exempted from any penalty."

The second paragraph of article 340 states: "He who discovers his wife, or one of his female relatives, in an adulterous situation, and kills, wounds or injures one or both of them, benefits from a reduction in penalty."

The participant recommendations also called for establishing shelters for battered women or women whose lives are considered threatened.

These shelters, according to the recommendations, should be the designated alternative place for women to stay rather than the present system which is to detain them in prison for custodial protection purposes.

"We call for the establishment of shelters to ensure freedom of transportation, a proper environment and protection for women," the participants said.

Further, they maintained, cases involving incest should be filed by the prosecutor general rather than the current procedure which stipulates that only individuals subjected to incest have the right to file a case against his/her aggressor.

Participants also stressed that the press can and must play a vital role in covering all forms of violence committed against women.

Women journalists, they maintained, should be granted full freedom to interview victims of violence as well as their aggressors in an effort to explain and highlight social aspects and the role they play in motivating crimes committed against women.

The participants also urged the Kingdom's three Arabic major daily newspapers to alter their style in covering subjects concerning violence against women.

"[These newspapers] should, in a comprehensive manner, highlight and tackle the injustice and injury to which women are subjected rather than ignoring these issues," the recommendations said.

Activists and experts stressed during the workshop, organised by the Jordanian Women's Union (JWU), the need to change many of the existing laws especially the Penal and Civil Laws which they described as outdated and as biased towards men.

Participants presented papers covering the Penal Law and legislation, the role of the press in reporting domestic violence against women, women's status in Jordanian prisons, the stereotyping, cultural beliefs and traditions which lead to the so-called "honour crimes," and the Muslim and Christian religious positions on crimes committed against women.

According to one JWU member, the recommendations are expected to be forwarded to Parliament for revision and consideration in the next few weeks.

During Tuesday's opening session of the three-day workshop, Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Saad Hayel Srouf urged participants to forward their proposals to Parliament for new legislation or amendments to existing laws which are considered as discriminatory to women.

## Contracts won for work on Aqaba ports

AMMAN (Petra) — A consortium of Jordanian and foreign firms Monday won two contracts from the Jordanian Ports Corporation (JPC) to design and prepare documents and tenders; the first for a new industrial wharf in Aqaba and the second for maintenance of the existing harbour.

JPC Director Mohammad Dalabih, who signed the contracts, stated that the projects were necessary in view of continued increases in the volume of exports by Jordanian companies dealing with phosphate and Dead Sea minerals in addition to the growing volume of new imports and exports dealing with compound fertilisers and phosphoric acid.

The port facility's expansion will inevitably raise the volume of exports and imports from three million tonnes in 1995 to around eight million tonnes by the end of the century, Mr. Dalabih said citing data from the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company and the Arab Potash Company which operates near the southern tip of the Dead Sea.

He said that the projected wharf will be 400 metres long and 20 metres wide and should be able to manage 50,000 tonne vessels.

Mr. Dalabih said that the tender awarded for the wharf's research and designs is worth JD 32,600 and that designs are scheduled to be completed within 230 days ending in August, 1997.

As for the maintenance contract, he said that the work will involve nine wharfs, two of which were constructed in the early 1960s and the remaining seven in 1980, adding that maintenance is necessary in order to reinforce against earthquakes.

Mr. Dalabih also stated that the maintenance contract is worth JD115,000 and that 120 days have been allotted to prepare the designs and tender documents after which the JPC will invite bidders for the work to be conducted in the next three years.

He said that the JPC is earmarking JD500,000 for the work accomplished in 1997 and will allocate necessary funds for the subsequent years.

## Ambassador promotes private sector cooperation

AMMAN (Petra) — Bahraini Ambassador to Jordan Mohammad Musallam has called for private sectors in his country as well as those in Jordan to initiate cooperation aimed at bolstering bilateral ties in economic trade and tourist arenas.

In a Monday interview with the Jordan News Agency, Petra, to mark Bahrain's National Day, Mr. Musallam said that the private sectors are invited to conclude agreements to facilitate and ensure exchanges in these fields.

He described tourism as one of the main areas where these sectors can actively collaborate, both through tourist agencies and joint investments in tourist projects.

Mr. Musallam affirmed that Bahrain is also eager to pursue further collaboration with Jordan in vocational training as signed by the two sides earlier this year, and he outlined this procedure as a first step towards coordination of bilateral human resources.

The ambassador stated that visits by His Majesty King Hussein and Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti reflect the strong bonds between the citizens of both countries.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**King sends cable of good wishes to Bhutan**

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Monday sent a cable of congratulations in his name and on behalf of the Jordanian people to President of Bhutan, Singi Wangtsock, congratulating him on his country's national day.

**Lower House to convene Wednesday**

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament will Wednesday convene under the chairmanship of Speaker Saad Hayel Srouf. Yesterday, the Finance and Economy Committee convened under the chairmanship of Deputy Abed Musa Nahar with the participation of the ministers of finance, tourism and antiquities, administrative development as well as the directors of the Civil Service Commission and the Budget Department.

**Egyptian minister confirms power linkage**

CAIRO (Petra) — Egyptian Minister of Electricity Maher Abaza has confirmed that power linkage between Jordan and Egypt as well as that between Egypt and Libya will be in full operation as of next September.

Come and join us for a  
**Christmas Breakfast**  
at  
**Amman Bookshop**  
Friday Dec. 20 09:30 - 11:30

## WHAT'S GOING ON

### FILM

\* Children's film "The Lion King" at the British Council, Jabal Amman at 5:00 p.m.

### CHRISTMAS SHOWS

\* "Special show and sale of Christmas crafts at the Jordan Crafts Centre (Alaydi), Jabal Amman, Second Circle (Tel. 644555), until Dec. 31.

\* Christmas special at the Jordan River Designs showroom (hand-made ornaments and decoration), Jabal Amman, First Circle (Tel. 613081/2), until Dec. 31.

### EXHIBITIONS

\* Works by several artists entitled "The Artist and the Environment" by several artists at Alia Art Gallery, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 30.

\* Works of small paintings by Jordanian and Arab artists at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens St. (Tel. 687598), until Jan. 14.

\* Water colour works by Jabbar Mijbil entitled "Declared Hunches" at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Uttheina, until Dec. 25.

\* Works by Spanish painter Clara Amado at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman until 15 Jan.

\* Works by ten contemporary Indonesian artists entitled "From Scripts to Abstraction" at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (open daily except Tuesdays), until Jan. 12.

\* Painting exhibition by Hind Nasser at the Jordan Arts and Crafts Centre/Artisana, Jabal Amman (Tel. 647858), until Jan. 10. Also displaying a regular exhibition of arts and crafts and Christmas items.

\* Display of Christmas gift items at the Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman (Tel. 658696/7) until Jan. 2.

\* Works by Rula Al Shuqairi at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until Jan. 4. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

\* Works on the life of Andre Malraux at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 24.

\* Graphics by computer exhibition by Ismail Shamout at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 24.



# Rwandan refugees flood home from Tanzania

NGARA, Tanzania (R) — Tens of thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees ended their two-and-a-half years of exile in Tanzania Monday, ridding home to Rwanda in a tide estimated to total up to 300,000 since the weekend.

"According to our latest information, people are now crossing the border at a rate of 15,000 an hour," said an official with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at its Ngara Operations Centre.

Many refugees slept overnight on the road from the camps in Tanzania, as they did on Saturday night, but the border crossing at Rusomo Bridge remained open for thousands who kept walking.

Trucks, buses and vans were ready inside Rwanda to pick up footsore refugees, whose will to stay out of Rwanda cracked with a brief flurry of blows from sick-wielding Tanzanian troops.

Tanzania ordered all 540,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees out by the end of the month and troops intervened when many surged out of their camps last week and beaded away from the Rwandan border.

The refugees left Rwanda in 1994 after Hutu mobs and militiamen killed about 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. They say they fear reprisals from Tutsis if they return home.

It was unclear exactly how many refugees had entered Rwanda since Saturday but a column estimated by UNHCR at 200,000 Monday stretched for 90 kilometres inside Tanzania and aid workers expected the first in the line to cross later Monday.

Anne Willem Bijleveld of UNHCR said Tanzanian soldiers used force to break the grip of intimidators opposed to the return of the refugees.

"In order to break the grip of the leaders... some sort of force must be used," he said. "We've never been able to deal with the grip of intimidators. This was the main problem from day one."

Asked why UNHCR would not protest to Tanzania, he said: "We feel the situation in Rwanda is conducive to return and that the people so far have been totally misled by their leaders."

"What we witnessed is the military and police trying to do it (repatriation) in a most peaceful manner," Mr. Bijleveld added.

UNHCR has been criticised by the human rights group Amnesty International for its stance over the Rwandan refugees in Tanzania, which Amnesty says is at odds with the U.N. agency's commitment to protect refugees from forced expulsion.

Rwandan and Tanzanian authorities barred journalists from the border area for much of the time but most refugees seemed resigned to returning under pressure from troops and police.

The long column Monday included refugees from six

camps who left Thursday in a failed attempt to avoid repatriation.

Another group who said they hoped to trek to Kenya was also ordered Sunday to turn on to a road leading back to Rwanda.

Human rights groups have reported no mass killings in Rwanda since an estimated 600,000 refugees flooded back from eastern Zaire last month after fighting forced them out of their camps.

Foreign aid workers said Kizimana's refugee column included hundreds of Hutu hardliners, the camp intimidators.

"There's definitely 10,000 or so who can't go back and won't go back. I was at the head of the column Saturday. For the first five kilometres, it was led by young men, young and healthy... Carrying very little," said a foreign aid official.

Meanwhile, Zairean rebels Monday appealed to government troops to switch sides and join their forces, renewing a propaganda war designed to weaken army morale ahead of President Mobutu Sese Seko's return home.

The appeal was issued in two documents signed by two lieutenant-colonels in the Zairean army who have apparently switched sides and joined the rebels.

The documents were obtained by Reuters from senior aides to rebel leader Laurent Kabila, president of the rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (ADFL).

"It is I, Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Alidor Siku Tchomba. I call on all members of the Zairean army to join the Congo Liberation Army (ALC) so as to serve our nation," one said.

"I am addressing you today, to ask you to lay down your arms and join the ranks of the ALC in order to improve the lives of men, women and children in our dear country," said a second seven-page document signed by lieutenant-colonel, technician and chief of staff, Lokilo Nene Beseke. Both documents gave detailed career biographies of the soldiers' rise through Zairean army ranks but said nothing about why they switched sides. The two soldiers were little known.

Lt. Col. Tchomba said that indiscipline in the army was caused by non-payments, division, tribalism, non-respect for the hierarchy and the chief of the Zairean army himself.

Zairean rebels, who declared a ceasefire and proposed negotiations last week, control much of North and South Kivu after a two-month campaign against the Zairean army. Zairean government forces, weakened by indiscipline and low morale, collapsed before the rebel advances at Goma, Bukavu and Uvira and the army fled, looting heavily, witnesses said.

Goma residents say the defeat of the army in November has ended the tyranny of Zairean government soldiers in the town.



Former Pakistani cricket captain Imran Khan flashes a victory sign during a rally which is part of his election campaign in Karachi Sunday (Reuters photo)

## Imran Khan predicts victory in Pakistan's 'revolution' election

KARACHI (AFP) — Former Pakistan cricket star Imran Khan said Monday his new political party would take power after elections in February that he predicted would be a "revolution" for the country.

"I can see a big revolution in Pakistan through the elections. This will be a historic election and I believe my party, which will field honest and new people, will win the elections," he said in an interview.

"People will trust new faces," the 43-year-old former national cricket team captain said.

Mr. Khan, who launched his Movement For Justice (Tehreek-e-Insaf) in April said his party would field candidates in 700 national and provincial constituencies.

Mr. Khan became a bitter rival of deposed Premier Benazir Bhutto even before launching into politics. He is now campaigning on a platform of clean government.

"We have a message of love and justice," he said, adding that his election efforts in different parts of the country "have been a great success."

Mr. Khan, currently in the country's largest city, Karachi, said he would contest the election in all four provinces of the country.

He vowed to defeat Ms. Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League led by another former prime minister, Nawaz Sharif.

After leading Pakistan to World Cup victory in Australia in 1992, Mr. Khan retired from cricket to devote himself to raising funds from the public for a cancer hospital he later built in his hometown of Lahore in memory of his mother.

He married Jemima, daughter of Anglo-French

tycoon Sir James Goldsmith, in 1995 stirring up a controversy in Pakistan. His opponents dubbed him a hypocrite for marrying a girl who converted to Islam. It has hardly dented his popularity however.

Mr. Khan said after coming into power his party would punish corrupt politicians, reform the administration and police and take steps to encourage foreign investment.

Movement For Justice would work for the establishment of "true" Islamic institutions in the country after initiating a national debate, Mr. Khan said.

"I do not think that any Western country would object if there is enlightened Islam in Pakistan. Instead, they should be happy that we are going to make Pakistan an enlightened Islamic state," he said.

"Even the West does not know what Islam is all about. If there is a revolution in any Muslim country, then they get afraid of fundamentalism. They also should get a bit relaxed. This is our shortcoming, that we never explained Islam to the West," Mr. Khan said.

He pledged "revolutionary" changes in the education and health sectors.

Mr. Khan said his government would pursue an independent foreign policy and promote self-reliance for national uplift.

His party would develop relations with China, Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, he said, describing these countries as "traditional allies."

He said it would not be possible for a government of his party to have relations with Israel until the issue of Jerusalem was resolved.

Meanwhile, two more senior police officers were arrested in Karachi Monday

in connection with the killing of Murtaza Bhutto, estranged brother of deposed Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

Shahid Hayat, 30 and Rai Tahir 28, were among several police officers implicated by Murtaza's party in a conspiracy to kill him outside his Karachi villa in September.

The refusal of the Sindh Province High Court to grant them formal bail was confirmed by the Supreme Court and police immediately detained the two, witnesses said.

The court however accepted a bail before arrest application by former Karachi police chief, Shoaib Suddle, over the case, court sources said.

Chief Suddle was ordered to pay a surety of 500,000 (\$12,500), they said.

Former chief of the Intelligence Bureau Masood Sharif, another senior police officer, Wajid Durrani, and 11 police constables have so far been jailed in connection with the killing of Murtaza Bhutto.

Murtaza and seven colleagues were killed in a shootout on Sept. 20, when police tried to arrest his bodyguards. Police said the guards were carrying unlicensed weapons and involved in terrorist activities.

Murtaza Bhutto's party maintain that he was killed in a pre-planned conspiracy.

The arrests follow the registration of a formal complaint against the police, the husband of Benazir Bhutto, Asif Ali Zardari, and other government officials.

Mr. Zardari remains in custody in Karachi after the dismissal of the Bhutto government on Nov. 5 by President Farooq Ahmad Leghari on allegations of corruption and misrule. He has not been charged in connection with Murtaza Bhutto's death.

## Ships sink off Japan in new blow for U.S. Navy

TOKYO (R) — Two small U.S. Navy ships sank off Okinawa in separate incidents Monday in a fresh embarrassment for the U.S. military in Japan.

The sinking of the two amphibious craft, in which all 21 crew members were rescued unharmed, came just as Japanese minesweepers started searching for an unexploded bomb dropped in Okinawan waters by a U.S. warplane.

The bomb was jetisoned by a U.S. Marine Corps jet last Tuesday. Although the bomb fell harmlessly into the sea, a controversy has since flared about the way the U.S. military and Japanese authorities handled the incident.

In Monday's misbaps, two light amphibious recovery craft (LARC) sank off Camp Schwab on the Pacific coast of Okinawa, southern Japan.

The loss of two naval vessels on a single day brought yet more unwelcome publicity for the U.S. military and is likely to fuel Okinawan anxiety about possible accidents involving the huge U.S. military machine on their doorstep.

A U.S. Navy spokesman said the reason the first ship sank was not known. Its crew transferred to the second ship, which also sank after developing engine and steering problems. The crews were plucked out of the water by a rescue ship.

Okinawa houses more than 75 per cent of all U.S. military facilities in Japan, a legacy of the U.S. occupation which followed a bloody World War II battle there in 1945.

A public outcry against the huge U.S. military presence there flared up last year after the rape of a local schoolgirl by three U.S. servicemen.

Two weeks ago, Japan and the United States agreed on a plan to streamline U.S. bases on Okinawa but without reducing the 28,000 U.S. military personnel stationed there.

On Monday, Okinawa Governor Masahide Ota said the United States still has not apologised to Okinawa for the lost bomb.

"There should be an apology or explanation from the United States for causing anxiety among the people of Okinawa," Mr. Ota told reporters.

During bombing training over the uninhabited Japanese island of Torishima in the Pacific last Tuesday, the bombing device of a U.S. Marine F/A-18 fighter-bomber jammed.

The pilot tried to land his plane at the Kadema Air Force Base in Okinawa with the live, 450 kilogramme bomb still attached to the wing.

But the base air traffic controller ordered him to jettison the entire bomb rack into the East China Sea 10 kilometres west of the port of Naha, the provincial capital.

It took the U.S. military six hours to notify the Japanese Foreign Ministry, the ministry said. But the ministry did not report it to the prime minister's office, saying later that the report was unconfirmed.

The Japanese Coast Guard waited a full 24 hours after the jetisoning to seal off the area to inter-island ferries. There is a chance that the bomb could explode if passing ships cause a change in the water pressure near it.

On Monday, two Japanese minesweepers started a search for the sunken bomb. Two U.S. Navy minesweepers also left the port of Yokosuka near Tokyo to take part in the operation.

But as the minesweepers were starting the search, news of the sinkings emerged.

## Burma arrests 8 more opposition members

BANGKOK (Agencies) — Burma's military authorities have arrested another eight members of Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), an NLD source said Monday.

At least eight NLD members from Irrawaddy Division, just outside the Burmese capital were arrested Friday following student protests across the city, the NLD source said by telephone from Rangoon.

The arrests brought to 39 the number of NLD members still in detention following a wave of student demonstrations which began two weeks ago, sparking a security clampdown in Rangoon, the source said.

The source also said another five NLD members had also been detained but later released, adding that party officials were still trying to determine why the irrawaddy activists had been picked up by the authorities.

"We still don't know very much about this," he said. "It's up to NLD officials to find out and take the necessary steps."

Meanwhile, panic buying after this month's student

unrest in the Burmese capital has sent prices of food staples rocketing at least 10 per cent, residents said Monday.

Prices jumped after retailers took advantage of a sudden surge in demand while tight security upset cargo flows from the provinces, they told Reuters.

Local analysts and residents estimated prices, most notably of rice, meat and fish, had risen by at least 10 per cent across the board and hit the poor the hardest.

Earlier this month, university students launched the largest anti-government street protests seen in Rangoon since the pro-democracy uprisings of 1988 which the military crushed leaving thousands dead or in jail.

The ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) briefly detained more than 860 protesters this month. The students were demanding greater freedom and rights and protesting against police brutality.

The government, determined to stop the demonstrations growing into civil unrest, closed universities.

placed five army tanks outside Rangoon City Hall and stationed troops around the capital.

Witnesses and diplomats said the show of force had been effective. Students have not taken to the streets since. Rangoon was calm Monday.

According to food dealers, cargo shipments from the provinces into Rangoon were continuing but security blocks along some roads in the capital made it hard for even distribution.

"The market suddenly turned into a sellers' market when most people rushed to buy rice out of panic," said Ko San Tin, a construction worker from Dagon Myothit, a new satellite town northeast of Rangoon.

"To make matters worse, the retailers took advantage of the situation as demand grew," he said, adding some had sold out of stock within hours.

"We hope the situation returns to normal as soon as possible," said another construction worker Ko Ban Maung. "Although we cannot expect the prices to come down much, we hope they won't fluctuate so much."

## Bangladesh marks 25 years of independence

DHAKA (R) — Bangladesh marked its independence silver jubilee Monday with spectacular military fanfare, ending a month of events celebrating the country's liberation from Pakistan.

Chinese-built tanks and armoured vehicles joined a Victory Day parade as MiG aircraft flew overhead. President Shahabuddin Ahmad took a salute from a march past by army, navy and air force troops.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, her cabinet colleagues and other political leaders watched the show from under a huge canopy.

Tens of thousands of people flocked to a memorial to lay wreaths and pay tribute to the war dead while political leaders made speeches vowing to continue their struggle against poverty and hunger.

Bangladesh, formerly East Pakistan, won independence with India's backing on Dec. 16, 1971, after nine months of fighting. On that day, more than 90,000 Pakistani troops surrendered to the joint Bangladesh-India military command in Dhaka.

Mrs. Hasina's government, whose Awami League Party led the war effort, marked the 25th anniversary with a month-long programme of seminars and exhibitions.

State-owned television organised talks, showed library pictures of the war and staged plays.

Mrs. Hasina's arch rival, former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, is taking medical treatment in Saudi Arabia. But she sent a victory-day message urging people to work hard for creating a better future for them.

Mrs. Hasina's Awami League won elections in June for the first time in 21 years, but is now facing growing threats to topple her. Mrs. Khaleda's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) lost no time in launching a campaign to oust the new government.

## Gorbachev calls for new union of former Soviet states

MOSCOW (R) — Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, still searching for a public role five years after the Soviet Union collapsed, said Monday he could help forge a plan to renew a union of ex-Soviet republics.

Largely ignored in the country he transformed by unleashing the reforms of perestroika and glasnost, Mr. Gorbachev called on a conference that included former aides and members of his Communist Party politburo to draft a plan for a new union.

"I favour a new voluntary union of the sovereign governments, each enjoying equal rights, in the near future," he told the group.

"Let's give thought as to how we can unify our work so that we could present to the politicians in power a well thought out, serious, responsible proposal," said Mr. Gorbachev, winner of the 1990 Nobel Peace Prize.

Mr. Gorbachev, 65, who has recently returned from visits to the United States and Europe to promote his memoirs, has long been haunted by the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 and the impact it has on his legacy.

Since leaving office, he has sought a formula for winning support among former Soviet republics for a new union.

The new grouping "should take into account the national interest of Russia and of our nearest neighbours, the citizens of the former Soviet republics," Mr. Gorbachev said.

Of the former Soviet states, only Belarus has declared its interest in reuniting with Russia.

Mr. Gorbachev left the Kremlin on Dec. 25, 1991, soon after Russian President Boris Yeltsin and leaders of Ukraine and Belarus signed an agreement ending the Soviet Union.

The father of perestroika and glasnost has often complained the agreement was a conspiracy that unleashed a wave of hard times across the former superpower.

"Why did Russia need independence? From whom did they need to be independent? Itself?" Mr. Gorbachev asked.

In his comments, the former leader suggested that he was still struggling to understand the events that relegated the Soviet Union to the dustbin of history.

"What are the reasons for the USSR's collapse?" he asked.

He then placed the blame on rival Yeltsin's policies and on the leaders of the August 1991 coup, whose failed effort to revive a hardline Communist government prompted the Soviet republics to declare their independence.



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Serbian students carry the American flag as they flash the Serb three-fingers victory sign during an anti-government protest in Belgrade Sunday.

## S. Korean court commutes Chun's sentence to life; businessmen freed

SEOUL (R) — A South Korean appeals court Monday commuted the death sentence on ex-President Chun Doo Hwan, mastermind of the 1980 massacre in Kwangju, and cut the jail term of another former president.

The court also reduced the sentences on a clutch of generals tied to the events and let five business tycoons, including the head of the giant Daewoo Group, walk free from bribery charges.

In decisions that outraged victims of the 1980 military atrocity and softened the impact of an anti-corruption drive.

The Seoul High Court granted leniency to nearly all leading actors in the country's "trial of the century."

The most-dramatic decision was to commute Mr. Chun's death sentence to life imprisonment on charges that included ordering an attack on democracy activists in the southern town of Kwangju. Several hundred died when a May 18 insurrection was put down by crack paratroopers.

The verdicts, faced with sayings from the Chinese classics and even Latin, set off gasps of disbelief and anger among 250 spectators, including families of some Kwangju victims.

Outside the court, the mother of one victim, Lee Keum-Soon, wept as she denounced the decision.

## Clinton's national security team to focus on nuclear proliferation

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton said his new national security team would focus on curbing nuclear proliferation and post-cold war security threats like terrorism, while promoting free trade and economic growth.

Mr. Clinton said he had a clear vision for the new team to include U.N. Ambassador Madeleine Albright as secretary of state and National Security Adviser Anthony Lake as director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

"I think we've got a clear vision... At the end of the cold war, going into a world which is a global village, what do we have to do to enhance the security of the American people? We have to finish the unfinished business of the cold war," Mr. Clinton said in an interview with C-Span aired Sunday night. The interview was taped on Dec. 9.

Mr. Clinton's recent cabinet appointments were welcomed by lawmakers, but many observers said the new national security team lacked a clear vision.

In addition to continuing negotiations with Russia on dismantling both countries' nuclear arsenals, the new team would have to deal with "the new security threats of the 21st century, especially enhanced terrorism, proliferation of weapons, including biological and chemical weapons," he said.

"And then we have to create a system of cooperation where nations share more of the burdens and responsibilities," Mr. Clinton said, citing as examples peacekeeping efforts coordinated within NATO, and U.N. involvement in the Gulf War.

Finally, the team would have to focus on creating "a global economic system that is more open and more expansive and gives more countries a chance to participate in the economic growth in a way that is also fair to countries like the United States, which have kept our markets open," he said.

## Croat refugees from Serbia resettle former Serb-held Croatian province

KISTANJE, Croatia (AFP) — Croats are resettling the area held for four years by Croatian Serbs as the self-proclaimed Republic of Krajina before they were driven out by Zagreb's forces.

Ironically, the new arrivals are Croats who formerly lived in Serbia's province of Kosovo before they were forced to leave in 1991 after a crackdown by the authorities in Belgrade.

The small town of Kistanje, in the Dalmatian hinterland between Sibenik and Knin, is considered to be the birthplace of the idea of a Republic of Krajina, when local Serbs rebelled against Croatia's secession from Yugoslavia.

The town is now deserted following the flight of 180,000 Serbs into neighboring Bosnia or Serbia proper in the face of the Croatian army's lightning offensive last year.

The thousands of Croat refugees Zagreb hoped would fill the vacuum spontaneously failed to materialize, and Kistanje is at the heart of a pilot scheme designed to encourage repopulation of the area, which has become virtually a wasteland.

Candidates for resettlement include Croatian citizens with particular expertise to aid development and reconstruction, or those who lack employment and housing.

## Vietnam remembers national struggle, 50 years on

HANOI (R) — Vietnam's official media Monday launched an elaborate celebration of the country's struggle for independence from France and called on people to draw a lesson of national solidarity and Communist Party leadership.

Dailies and the official news agency carried lengthy accounts of a bloody battle between French troops and Viet Minh forces which began in the streets of Hanoi on Dec. 19, 1946, and raged for 60 days.

The 50th anniversary of that date, which Vietnam formally recognizes as the start of the war against French colonial rule, will be marked with ceremonies in the capital Thursday.

"The 60 days and nights of fighting have given us precious lessons, including lessons about building great unity of all the people, about the role of party leadership and the political system," said Hanoi Mayor Huong Van Nghien.

"In particular, there is a lesson about building defense by all the people and in building the people's strength for the struggle to defend the fatherland," Mr. Nghien was quoted as telling a meeting of 1,000 officials and war veterans Saturday.

State media has carried tales of heroism and historic victories ahead of the anniversary and on Friday the defense minister, General Doan Khue, issued a rallying cry to the military.

Gen. Khue, who ranks sixth in the elite politburo, warned that hostile forces were stepping up their efforts to undermine the country's Communist government.

He said Hanoi had smashed hundreds of plots to sabotage or incite riots over the past few years and needed to seize the opportunity now to strengthen the military through better equipment, better personnel and increased training.

"In the current world climate of fierce conflicts between nations and classes, any country that does not know how to use weapons deserves to be treated as a slave," he said.

Vietnam News Agency said the 1946 Hanoi battle, in which the Vietnamese used ancient French muskets, old American Remington rifles, spears, swords and machetes, was triggered by the French government's violation of peace accords.

After eight more years of fighting, the Viet Minh controlled much of Vietnam and sealed their victory over the French with the seige and battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

## Serbian court gives control of second town to opposition

BELGRADE (R) — A court in the Serbian town of Smolodovska Palanka Monday ordered the local electoral commission to give control of the municipal council to the opposition Zajedno (Together) Coalition, a Zajedno spokesman said.

Spokesman Slobodan Vukosavljevic said the court ordered the electoral commission to accept the results of polling held four weeks ago, after the commission annulled the poll citing "irregularities." On Sunday a court in the southern city of Nis ordered that victory should be handed back to Zajedno.

"This is very good news, but it goes only half-way," Mr. Vukosavljevic said. "We still don't know whether the electoral commission will accept the ruling, but people now see that their demonstrating brings results."

Opposition protestors headed into a fifth week of street demonstrations in the Serbian capital Monday hoisted by President Slobodan Milosevic's biggest concession yet to his regime's opponents.

Another day of protests — the 28th in succession — were planned for Belgrade and around 30 regional towns as the opposition at-

tempted to broaden the anti-government movement.

Signs that the huge demonstration of public anger was paying off came Sunday when a state-controlled court in Nis, Serbia's second city, ordered moves which are likely to restore the opposition's sweeping victory in the town in last month's local elections.

In Geneva, top international official Carl Bildt further stoked international opposition when he urged Mr. Milosevic to peacefully settle his conflict with the protestors, and warned the country was "headed for disaster."

The United States began turning the screw on Mr. Milosevic by holding its first official contacts with the opposition Sunday in Geneva.

The 90-minute Geneva meeting brought together U.S. Assistant Secretary of State John Kornblum and leading opposition figure Vuk Draskovic.

Another opposition leader Zoran Djindjic hailed the court ruling as a "concession" and "a sign of detente by the authorities."

Mr. Djindjic was addressing a rally in Belgrade after the court ruling gave the electoral commission 10 days to look again at results affecting 26 of the 70 seats on the Nis Municipal Council.

Seventeen students in Nis began a 240 kilometre protest march in relays to Belgrade to mark their solidarity with students there and were expected to arrive in the capital Tuesday.

They called for a meeting with Mr. Milosevic, who since the start of the crisis a month ago, has refused to be drawn into a war of words with either the students or opposition protestors.

Mr. Bildt, in Geneva for talks on humanitarian issues concerning Bosnia, said: "Milosevic has to recognise that he has to climb down."

Throughout the last year and a half I have taken a dim view of the situation in Serbia because the combination of political, economic and social problems is so immense after the failures of the last few years that it will be really challenging to prevent major problems," said Mr. Bildt, who is the international community's high representative for Bosnia.

Asked if Mr. Milosevic had to go, Mr. Bildt said: "There has to be a democratic process. Whoever they choose in that process will have to hear responsibility for fundamental reform."

The Nov. 17 local elections marked Mr. Milosevic's biggest electoral setback as the opposition coalition Together won control of 15 of the country's 18 biggest towns.

It prompted draconian moves to annul the results, which sparked the mass street protests which have regularly brought crowds of 100,000 onto Belgrade's streets and led to condemnation by the international community.

The United States has led calls for Mr. Milosevic to recognise the results of the municipal elections, and the opposition has insisted the marches will go on until then.

"We believe that it is now essential for President Milosevic to accept the results of the election and to open himself to a continuing democratic process with all democratic forces in the country," Mr. Kornblum said after the Geneva meeting Sunday.

Mr. Draskovic, accused Mr. Milosevic of "provoking violence, bloodshed, even civil war within Serbia," saying he was "ready to repeat the scenario from a few years ago when he promoted a civil war in Yugoslavia."

## Taleban refuse amnesty for opponents

KABUL (AP) — A senior official ruled out amnesty for opponents of Afghanistan's Taleban government Monday, dampening prospects for a peace pact in the bitter civil war.

The Taleban's deputy foreign minister, Sher Mohammad Stanikzai, also took a hard line on restrictions on women and said aid workers were still subject to arrest, denying claims from international aid agencies that his government was beginning to show flexibility.

In recent weeks, the United Nations peace envoy, Dr. Norbert Holm has been shuttling throughout the region to try to broker a peace agreement, beginning with a ceasefire between the Taleban, who control two thirds of Afghanistan, and their opponents, who are concentrated in the north.

Rashid Dostum, who is based in northern Mazar-e-Sharif is reportedly ready to stop fighting and share power.

But Mr. Stanikzai said that Dostum would have to face "the nation" for his alleged crimes.

"Rashid Dostum is responsible for the deaths of (hundreds of thousands) of people," Mr. Stanikzai said. "Even if the government excuses Dostum, the nation will not excuse him. The personal charges against him cannot be excused."

Mr. Stanikzai said the same was true for the other leaders of the coalition battling the Taleban, including ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani and his military chief, Ahmed Shah Massoud.

But he singled out Mr. Dostum because of his links to the Soviet-backed government of President Najibullah, who was tortured and hung when the Taleban took control of Kabul in September.

Four years ago, Najibullah, who uses only one name, handed power to Muslim rebels he had fought for nearly 14 years. He then took refuge in a U.N. compound in Kabul.

Muslim insurgents immediately turned their guns on each other destroying nearly 70 per cent of Kabul and killing more than 30,000 people.

Mr. Stanikzai reiterated a Taleban proposal for an interim government made up of representatives of all the warring parties, but the threat of retribution against Mr. Dostum and others meant that they were unlikely to accept the offer.

He also ruled out any ceasefire that would divide the country.

"We would not accept others ruling those provinces" currently in their enemies hands, he said.

Mr. Stanikzai also dismissed claims from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that

their Afghan employees were safe from arrest.

Last week, Taleban authorities released four UNHCR workers held for 25 days for "anti-government activities."

The arrests had inhibited critical winter relief work for all the agencies who deal with hundreds of thousands of war refugees.

The UNHCR along with several other aid groups is providing desperately needed blankets, clothes and plastic sheeting to cover the gaping holes of their bombed-out homes.

The UNHCR said it had received "firm assurances" there would be no repeat arrests, which angered Mr. Stanikzai.

"The UNHCR wanted to bring pressure on us (but) we will never compromise with anyone against our national interest," Mr. Stanikzai said, addressing a small group of reporters in his Foreign Ministry offices. "Especially (Afghan) nationals working for foreign agencies."

He said the four had been released because their actions had only "indirectly" helped the enemy. Asked to specify, he said they had told an American television network that the Taleban had carried out atrocities against civilians, especially women.

"That was baseless propaganda," he said.

He also heatedly dismissed claims by Terry Pitzner, who heads UNHCR operations in Kabul, that the Taleban were showing greater flexibility and would soon allow girls to go to school.

The Taleban has shut down girls' schools, banned women from working, and forced women to don head-to-toe covering since taking control of the capital.

"They committed themselves for the first time to education for males and females through the 12th grade," Mr. Pitzner had said Sunday, a day after meeting Taleban officials.

Mr. Stanikzai, who is perceived by Westerners in Kabul as presenting the "moderate" face of the Taleban, said "we are not required to give this guarantee to the world."

He warned the international community to mind its own business.

"It is our own problem and our own business," he said.

He also said that the Taleban sought general elections within three years — but he would not guarantee universal suffrage for women, saying that would be decided after the fighting had stopped.

The Taleban, mostly former Islamic clerics and seminarians, also have banned music, games and movies, and require men to wear beards and go to the mosque.

## Europeans form U.N. Rapid Reaction Force

COPENHAGEN (R) — Defence ministers from seven nations led by Denmark signed an agreement Sunday to set up a 4,000-man multinational force for use in international peacekeeping operations.

The force, the U.N. Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG), will be at the disposal of the U.N. Security Council for international peacekeeping and pre-emptive anti-conflict operations, a Danish Defence Ministry spokesman told Reuters.

The ministry said the force of soldiers from Austria, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Sweden would initially have its headquarters in Denmark.

"One of the United Nations problems is the long time it takes to react to new peacekeeping exercises. There is too long time between the decision to set up an operation and the actual deployment of peacekeeping troops in conflict areas," it said in a statement.

"Conflicts which could be halted by prompt intervention tend to escalate, hence the Danish initiative to establish a swift action, high readiness U.N. brigade."

In addition to the defence ministers of the participating nations, Finland and Ireland attended the signing ceremony at Eberhard on the

central Danish island of Funen as observers.

The ministry said the brigade would aim to deploy swiftly in conflict areas at two to four weeks' notice and stay for a maximum six-month period prior to the arrival of normal U.N. peacekeeping forces.

It said planning staff would start work on establishing the force in Denmark next year and it should be fully operational by 1999.

## Russia opens representative office in Taiwan

TAIPEI (R) — Russia's unofficial ambassador to Taiwan, having arrived on the island to open a representative office, said Monday that Moscow hoped to begin direct air links with Taipei by spring.

Retired diplomat Victor Trifonov said Russia had picked private carrier Transaero to fly the Taiwan route and expected the flights to boost bilateral exchanges.

"Personally, I hope that by spring it will be possible to start regular flights for two sides. ... I'm sure the air links would promote ex-

changes," Mr. Trifonov told reporters during a courtesy call at Taiwan's Foreign Ministry.

"Our air company, Transaero, is ready for this, and I hope your airline will join Transaero so it will be bilateral flights," he added.

Taiwan Foreign Minister John Chang confirmed the sides had been negotiating reciprocal flight rights and would likely strike a deal in early 1997.

The ministry issued a statement echoing Mr. Trifonov's desire to boost ties.

"The Russia representative office, together with our representative office in Moscow, will seek to boost economic, technological, academic and cultural exchanges between the two countries," the ministry said.

Taiwan set up its Moscow office in 1993.

Moscow, which has formal ties with Communist China rather than Taipei's exiled Republic of China, showed little interest in Taiwan during the Soviet era, but has come to envy the island's prosperity at a time of economic crisis at home.

China, which regards Taiwan as a renegade province, objects to foreign countries establishing formal links with Taipei and refuses to recognise those who do.

China and Taiwan split in 1949 after the Chinese Civil War. Beijing tries to isolate the island diplomatically but tolerates unofficial ties between Taiwan and the world.

Taipei suffered a major blow in its quest to defy the isolation when the biggest of its 30 diplomatic allies, South Africa, announced it would sever its official Taipei ties and recognise Beijing in 1997.



## Jordan Times

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Editorial and advertising offices:  
Jordan Press Foundation,  
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.  
Telephones: 684311, 699634  
Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO  
Facsimile: 696183

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## Reconciling changes

PRIME MINISTER Abdul Karim Kabariti's announcement Sunday that he was committed to introduce a new election law before the parliamentary elections in November 1997 constitutes a major step by the government to consolidate the democratic process in the country and put it on a solid track. There has been a lively debate about whether to put into effect new legislation to govern national elections in the future, and the prime minister's decision to do just that removes a major hurdle facing the future of parliamentary life in the country. Needless to say the significance of the decision rests with the fact that fair and free elections are at the heart of pluralistic democracy anywhere in the world and takes a centre stage in our efforts to ensure full and equitable representation. What remains now is to articulate changes that can be introduced to the current law on basis that are compatible not only with conditions here at home but also with international norms.

As Mr. Kabariti gets busy consulting with various political groups in an effort to reach a compromise that enjoys the widest possible support, we must remind ourselves of our international treaty obligations. The ongoing campaign to attain a national consensus has been met with serious difficulties centring first and foremost on the most effective means to establish sound electoral districts, whether for the purpose of allocating quotas on the basis of gender, ethnic and religious grounds, or the future of the one-person, one-vote criterion.

With regard to the fair distribution of electoral districts, there must be a balance between geographic and demographic considerations. Under international norms, which are binding on Jordan, the demographic consideration needs to be given priority in order to accord equal political rights to all citizens, no matter where they happen to reside. Increasing the number of the districts, as has been suggested by several quarters, could be just the means to strike a balance between two competing objectives.

The allocation of quotas to people on the basis of sex or religion or ethnic criteria must also be pursued with clear recognition of the overriding criterion of equality between nationals. Here again there are conflicting goals: on the one hand, we need to have women as well as religious and ethnic minorities fairly represented in Parliament; on the other, we need to observe the principle of equality between people irrespective of their gender, religion or ethnic origin. Reconciling all these goals is certainly not an easy task as other countries have faced similar problems but have yet to find the perfect formula to satisfy all objectives.

As for the one-person, one-vote principle, there is deep division in the country on that criterion with the greater majority opting for its deletion altogether because it has been judged as contributing to tribalism and sectarianism. If in fact that is the direct or even indirect result of the one-person, one-vote principle, then it becomes imperative that it is deleted or amended. If these negative consequences can be rectified by the redistribution of electoral districts, then the task becomes that much easier. The main factor, though, is that the government appears to be open-minded about the projected new law, and that in itself is a major step in the right direction.

## ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

OBSERVERS OF developments in the Palestinian lands cannot help observing a transformation in the relations between the Palestine National Authority and the Hamas movement, with both sides showing clear signs of ending their differences in the face of the common Israeli adversary, said Mahmoud Rimawi, a writer for Al Ra'i. The Palestinian authority has permitted the Islamic movement to organise public rallies during which Hamas supporters carried the portraits of their spiritual leader Ahmad Yassin side by side with those of Yasser Arafat, noted the writer. He said that while Hamas officially declares that its members are clinging on to their armed struggle against Israel, the spokesman of the movement, Mahmoud Zabbar, announced that the military activities against Israel should be reexamined because they may result in negative effects on the Palestinians, as was obvious in previous instances. Both the Palestinian authority and Hamas are aware of the seriousness of the Israeli danger and both no doubt realise the need for collaboration and coordination of their stands in the face of the hardline stand of the present Netanyahu government, he added. He said the Palestinian authority would act wisely if it continued to gradually set free Hamas detainees, as it has been doing lately, and Hamas would act wisely and responsibly if its leaders continued to coordinate their steps with the national authority's programmes of mobilising the nation in the face of the Israeli onslaught.

A WRITER for Al Dussour warned against any changes in the law on real estates and lands in the Jordan Valley, which stipulates that only relatives and members of the existing clans in the valley can conduct buying or selling transactions among themselves. By allowing outsiders to buy lands in the valley through amendments to the law, the government would be inviting agents working in the pay of the Israelis to purchase these lands and gradually turn them over to Israel which has its eyes on the fertile soil of the two sides of the River Jordan, charged Mohammad Subehi. The writer said the Zionist movement does not conceal its ambitious designs of taking hold of the fertile lands on each bank and the recent Israeli government's announcement that it will never withdraw from lands along the western bank of the River Jordan stands out as the best indication of such intentions.

## The View from Fourth Circle

# Valour and vulgarity in the MENA

By Rami G. Khouri

THE RECURRING political tensions in our region tend always to get the most press attention, which leaves us with a distorted picture of the real forces that will determine the long-term condition of the Middle East and its people. Hidden beneath the political, ideological, ethnic and religious currents of our region is a more profound tale of individuals, communities and governments working to achieve those goals that politicians keep promising to deliver — primarily, personal goals of health and education that in turn build stable, productive communities and, ultimately, credible and durable countries. Newly available data suggests that the Middle East and North Africa region is performing credibly in this respect, but remains hobbled by some serious constraints.

The historical record, I would guess, would confirm that political tension and violence are lowest among communities where basic human needs are adequately met and highest among societies where most people are not reasonably healthy, educated, fed and employed. Thus it is useful routinely to step back from the day-to-day course of events and take a snapshot of our region, in order to identify whether we are making progress, standing still or regressing in terms of the quality of life of our people. Several annual publications provide us with an opportunity to do this, including the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report, the World Bank's World Development Report, the Unified Arab Economic Report published by the Arab Monetary Fund and other pan-Arab organisations, and UNICEF's two excellent annual reports, namely the Progress of Nations and the State of the World's Children.

The 1997 State of the World's Children (SOWC) report released last week includes, as always, a particularly well organised statistical appendix that allows readers to compare an individual country's performance against that of other states, as well as to track a country or a region's progress over time and in several different fields. This year's SOWC report statistics include states' and regions' performance over the periods 1965-1980 and 1980-1995 or 1985-1995. A review of the Middle East and North Africa region's performance over those periods, in comparison with the rest of the developing world, reveals several interesting and generally reassuring trends. Broadly speaking, it provides room for optimism about the future of this region and its people, despite the pessimistic political prognosis one might glean from current political events. (The MENA region covered by these statistics comprises all Arab states plus Iran, except for Somalia, Mauritania, Bahrain and Qatar).

Two major trends emerge from the data: the region's slow movement towards the centre and away from the extremes of world performance in the fields monitored,

and the sharp contrasts in some indicators.

The move to the centre of the statistical tables is obvious when we compare the MENA region with the other regions in the report (Sub-Sahara Africa, South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the CIS/Baltic States that broadly cover the former Soviet Bloc countries).

**"The Arab World and the wider MENA region do suffer serious economic distortions and pressures, which are compounded by worsening environmental conditions, heavy debt pressures, and generally low-credibility political systems. At the same time, societies and governments alike are working together to achieve important and largely sustainable progress in the crucial spheres of health and education."**

In 1960, the MENA region's under 5 years mortality rate (USMR) of 244 child deaths per 1,000 live births was the second highest among the six regions, and above the developing world average of 216; today, the USMR of 60 deaths per 1,000 live births is third highest, and below the developing world average of 99. Similarly, the total fertility rate for women in the MENA region in 1960 was 7.1 children per woman — the highest in the world and above the developing world average of 6. In 1995, the MENA total fertility rate was 4.6, the second highest in the world after Sub-Sahara Africa, but still above the developing world average of 3.4. The MENA region's average annual reduction in total fertility rate in 1960-1980 was 0.7 per cent, the second lowest in the world after Sub-Sahara Africa, and below the developing world average of 1.5 per cent. In the period 1980-95, that rate of reduction in MENA was two per cent, ranking it third among the six developing regions of the world, and above the developing world average of 1.7 per cent.

The most striking contrasts in our region are between poor economic performance and swift improvement in

infant and child health, and between expenditures on health, education and the military.

In the period 1985-1994, the MENA region registered an average annual decline of 0.7 per cent in gross national product per capita (the third worst regional performance, after Sub-Sahara Africa and the CIS/Baltic states). Yet, despite this sustained economic decline, the MENA region registered the highest rate of decline in USMR among the six developing regions in the period 1980-1995; the annual reduction was 5.7 per cent in MENA, compared to 2.2 per cent for the entire developing world.

Another striking contrast shows that the MENA region has the highest rate of government spending on health and education, but also on defense; in 1995, 6 per cent of government spending in MENA states went into health care (compared to a 4 per cent average for the whole developing world), 15 per cent went into education (compared to 11 per cent for the developing world), and 21 per cent went for defense (compared to 13 per cent for the developing world).

These statistics suggest to me that our region cannot be defined in the extremist terms that seem most fashionable these days — neither in the amateurish bombast of many governments that want to assert their fraying legitimacy by self-congratulatory recitations of their caring character and good deeds, nor in the gloom-and-doom predictions of opposition forces that only see collapse and corruption all around them. The truth seems to be somewhere in the centre of both the polemics and the available statistics.

The Arab World and the wider MENA region do suffer serious economic distortions and pressures, which are compounded by worsening environmental conditions, heavy debt pressures, and generally low-credibility political systems. At the same time, societies and governments alike are working together to achieve important and largely sustainable progress in the crucial spheres of health and education.

We are challenged to come to terms with these contrasts and apparent contradictions, and better understand how it is that our region should simultaneously exhibit such valour and vulgarity. Important lessons beg to be learned from our experiences in MENA in the last several decades. We must identify the forces at work in our midst for good and for ill, in order to promote those forces which save children's lives and honour the dignity of humankind, and to banish those which degrade us and the integrity of our cultures, societies and states. UNICEF should be commended once again for helping us to see this larger picture, and for providing valuable indicators that allow us to track our progress — warts and all.

# Hebron should not represent issue of Israeli-Arab coexistence

By Henry Siegman

NEW YORK — It is most unfortunate, for Israel's good name no less than for the prospects for Israeli-Palestinian peace, that the 400 or so Jewish settlers who live in Hebron amidst more than 120,000 Palestinians have emerged as emblematic of the larger question of Jewish settlement in the territories, and of Jewish-Arab coexistence generally.

Both the Jewish settlement and the settlers in Hebron are entirely unlike other Jewish settlements and unlike the vast majority of the roughly 150,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

For starters, Israeli settlements elsewhere in the territories are not situated in the midst of Arab population centres. They are in self-contained areas that often adjoin Arab towns and villages but do not overlap them. This precludes a whole range of human and political confrontation, not to

speak of security problems, that can be seen as the unique result of the intertwining of Jewish and Arab populations in Hebron. (This is not to say that tensions do not exist between the other Israeli settlements and neighbouring Palestinian populations, only that they are of a different and far more manageable order).

**"The settlers in Hebron are ideological extremists who combine nationalistic extremism with religious and messianic zealotry, a deadly combination."**

More important, the overwhelming majority of Israel's settlers in the territories are not motivated by nationalist or religious passions, and are not necessarily hostile to Palestinian aspirations. These settlers chose to live in the territories because of cheap hous-

ing and quality-of-life considerations, not because they are intent on reclaiming sacred land.

In contrast, the settlers in Hebron are ideological extremists who combine nationalistic extremism with religious and messianic zealotry, a deadly combination. Many, if not most,

West Bank, as Rabbi Kahane did.

They venerate the late Baruch Goldstein, who murdered 29 Palestinians in a mosque in February 1994.

The presence of these 400 Jewish zealots in the midst of the most nationalistic of all Palestinian cities is a bomb waiting to explode. That explosion will be as tragic in its consequences as it is predictable, for the lesson of hopelessness that will be drawn from that coming violence is false.

It is a matter of record that Palestinian and Israeli negotiators who informally explored a final settlement during the previous Labour government were able to agree on the contours of a plan that would leave roots of the Jewish settlements and settlers in place. They even agreed to a plan for Jerusalem that leaves the city under the sovereignty of Israel and identifies an area of East Jerusalem, not currently perceived as part of the city, as the

capital of an eventual Palestinian entity.

However, if the Jewish-Palestinian confrontation in Hebron is seen as paradigmatic of the larger Israeli-Palestinian problem, an explosion in Hebron will persuade — falsely — both Palestinians and Israelis that peace is simply beyond their reach.

In Hebron, more so than anywhere else in that disputed land, the case for a continuing Jewish presence should have been made by Israelis who respect the human dignity and national aspirations of their Palestinian neighbours. Instead, it is being made by fanatics and fanatics who despise Palestinians and whom most Israelis would not welcome as neighbours of their own.

That is why it is so unfortunate that then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin failed to remove the settlers from Hebron immediately after Baruch Goldstein's massacre at the Tomb of the Patriarchs,

when most Israelis would not have objected.

Fanatics in Hebron, whether Jewish or Arab, should not be allowed to define the terms of Israeli-Palestinian coexistence. Neither Israeli nor Palestinian leader should mortgage their people's future to the apocalyptic fevers of these nationalistic, messianic madmen.

Israel's government has an obligation to provide security for its citizens who wish to live peacefully in Hebron. For the sake of the larger Israeli-Palestinian enterprise, those who intend their presence in Hebron to destroy the possibility of an Israeli-Arab peace do not deserve that protection and should be forcefully removed.

The writer, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and former head of the American Jewish Congress, was in Amman in the second half of November. This article is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune.

The following editorial is reprinted from the Dec. 7 issue of The Economist.

OVER THE past five years, tens of thousands of Algerians have died brutal deaths in the name of religion. Bandits masquerading as the soldiers of God, others as the defenders of the state, have slaughtered young and old in a hideous exchange of terrorism and counter-terrorism. The fear stretches beyond Algeria's shores: Islamists were the immediate suspects when a bomb exploded in a Paris station this week. Nowhere has Islamic militancy an uglier face. So, might it not be proper to try to separate politics from religion?

Proper, possibly, workable, almost certainly not. President Liamine Zeroual's amendments to Algeria's 1989 constitution, approved by 85 per cent of voters in a referendum on Nov. 28, prepare the way for a curtailed (and thus safer) version of the political pluralism that bloomed in Algeria in 1989 until early 1992, when the army openly took power to prevent the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) from winning an election. The declared intention of returning Algeria to peaceful democracy is fine. But the safety measures

## Algeria's agony

are so smothering that they are likely to frustrate the exercise.

The referendum itself raised eyebrows: the regime's unspoken claim that nearly 80 per cent of the electorate turned out to vote stretched credulity. The proposals were railroaded through, says the legal opposition — a bunch of mainly Islamic- or Berber-based parties, since the FIS is banned and the leaders of the National Liberation Front, the spider-web that misruled Algeria for so many years, have abandoned their unaccustomed role in opposition.

Opposition politicians take particular objection to the powers that the president, with the army behind him, will retain under the new constitution. For a start, the creation of a new second chamber gives the president the power to veto laws passed by the National Assembly. Yet most, if not all, of the politicians are expected to take part in the assembly elections planned for next year, finding a way round the ban on parties based on religion, language or region. They are the accidental victims of gunfire aimed at keeping the FIS off

the political scene. The two house-trained Islamic parties can probably change their names (borrowing from Turkey, where the Islamic party calls itself Welfare) and, if necessary, their constitutions. One of the two Berber-based parties has a broad appeal anyhow; the other may have difficulties.

The point of the constitutional changes is to exclude the FIS, to prevent it or anything like it from having influence, let alone from taking power.

The paradox is that this exclusion, intended to bring about peace, may help to keep Algeria at war. At one time, Mr. Zeroual, defying some of his old military colleagues, seemed to toy with the idea of political compromise, releasing the FIS leaders on the understanding that they would work with the regime to end the violence. Had this happened — it never came close — it might have separated Islamist politician from Islamist terrorist, isolating the throat-cutting hands known as the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). Instead, the regime continues to paint the FIS and the GIA with the same black terrorist brush.

With its leaders in prison or in exile or in hiding, the FIS's voice is indistinct. It has its wilder men; its own armed wing has played a part in the savagery. Yet its denunciation of violence against civilians is on record. In Rome last year its men signed a document committing the party to respect democratic principles. And it has moved some way towards detaching itself from the GIA. The two took radically different attitudes towards the referendum. The FIS called it a farce, but left its supporters to make up their own minds. The GIA threatened to slit the throat of anybody who voted.

The regime periodically claims that it is winning the war. It is not. Rather, the horror seems to climb new peaks. Islamist terrorists and semi-official vigilantes battle it out cruelly in towns south of Algiers, the innocent murdered to make the survivors afraid. The Islamist terrorists may have few friends left. But if the FIS, even yet, could be brought into the anti-war camp, the great distrust that most Algerians also feel towards their military rulers would be demed, helping the army to win its people's minds. If not their hearts.

## LETTERS

### Dangerous foam

To the Editor:

ASA frequent visitor to your beautiful country, and tour leader, I have recently brought my groups to visit Jerash. I make it a point to always stop by the Jabbok River because of its biblical significance.

This time, at the spot where the bridge and highway cross the river, and to our horror, we noticed white foam on the heavily polluted river.

Can something be done to preserve the environment in your country, especially your precious and meagre water supply?

Dr. Swee Hwa Quek,  
4 Bishan St. 13  
Singapore 579792.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.



# News

## Uday's condition is serious — opposition

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — President Saddam Hussein's son Uday is in "serious condition" following last week's ambush in Baghdad, an Iraqi opposition group which claimed responsibility for the attack said Monday.

"The condition of the criminal Uday, son of the despot Saddam, has deteriorated because he is suffering from severe wounds in different parts of his body," the Al Daw'a Al Islamiyah said Monday from its Damascus office.

Uday is in "serious condition," the group said quoting unidentified sources in Iraq.

Uday, who was in Ben Sina Hospital, was transferred to another location surrounded by elite security forces where a team of specialist doctors, including foreigners, were to operate on him, Al Daw'a said.

Al Daw'a issued a statement from its Beirut office on Saturday claiming responsibility for a machine-gun attack that wounded Uday as he was driving through the wealthy Al Mansour neighbourhood in the Iraqi capital on Thursday.

Founded in 1958, the Shiite Muslim Al Daw'a is Iraq's oldest Islamic opposition group and is headed by a collective leadership.

In Baghdad, official sources said several people were "seriously wounded" in the ambush against Uday. President Saddam showed "the same interest and goodness to those who were seriously wounded in the cowardly attack as to his own son," the official Al Jumhuriyah newspaper's editor Salah Al Mokhtar said in a commentary.

During a visit to Ben Sina Hospital where his son is being treated, "the president gave instructions that people wounded in the attack receive the same care as his son Uday," Mr. Mokhtar said.

The newspaper gave no other information about the wounded.

## Netanyahu informs King on status of negotiations

(Continued from page 1)

from Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti during his visit to Israel.

During his one-day visit to Jordan, Mr. Levy will also open a new premises for the Israeli embassy in the Rabia area of Amman, Mr. Tooregman said.

The embassy has been operating out of an Amman hotel since December 1994, when the two countries opened diplomatic missions in each other after

## Israel-PLO talks back on track

(Continued from page 1)

warned of new Palestinian protests should Israel go through with it, Israeli security officials, in turn, accused Arafat of plotting protests and only waiting for a good opportunity to give the green light for street violence.

The renewed contacts Sunday night between Israel and the Palestinians reportedly came at the urging of the United States.

Mr. Arafat agreed to meet with Mr. Netanyahu's attorney, Yitzhak Molcho, after having refused for several days to receive the prime minister's advisers. After the meeting, Mr. Arafat called Mr. Netanyahu in West Jerusalem.

A statement by Mr. Netanyahu's office said the prime minister asked Mr. Arafat to do more to rein in Palestinian militants, especially the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The group has claimed responsibility for a drive-by shooting last week in which a Jewish settler and her 12-year-old son were killed in the West Bank.

Mr. Netanyahu also told Mr. Arafat on Sunday night that an agreement on an Israeli troop pullback in the West Bank town of Hebron could be

## King holds talks with Tunisian prime minister

(Continued from page 1)

opened the meeting on Monday and reviewed bilateral cooperation in trade, industry, culture, transport, education and tourism.

Mr. Kabariti noted that Jordan and Tunisia had many things in common as both advocate political pluralism, democracy and oppose terrorism and they both strive to attain socio-economic development.

He expressed appreciation of the Tunisian premier's endeavours to cement Jordanian-Tunisian relations and to boost Arab solidarity.

Mr. Karoui expressed hope that the committee would assess Jordanian-Tunisian cooperation and plan for the future. He said Tunisia was giving due importance to its ties with Jordan, based on mutual respect and close cooperation in regional and international affairs.

He said Tunisia strives to end Arab differences and seeks solidarity and close coordination in common Arab affairs.

The Middle East peace process, he said, requires serious efforts so that the Arabs can enjoy durable and just peace and that the



His Majesty King Hussein on Monday presents the Al Nahda Medal of the First Order to Tunisian Prime Minister Hamed Al Karoui (Petra photo)

Palestinian people can regain their usurped lands.

Tunisia is following with deep concern the difficulties and the obstacles impeding the peace process. He said Tunisia had drawn the attention of the world community to the dangers inherent in any failure of the peace process and urged all concerned parties to bring pressure to bear upon Israel to honour its commitments and respect the peace accords,

he said.

A Jordanian-Tunisian technical committee co-chaired by Minister of Transport Naser Lawzi and his Tunisian counterpart Sadeq Rabeh held a separate meeting to discuss economic, trade, cultural, tourism and higher education issues and lists of goods that would be exempted from customs duty on a reciprocal basis.

The committee agreed to set up sub-committees to

report to the technical committee as soon as possible so that agreements can be included in the final communiqué of the higher committee meeting.

Also on Monday, the Jordanian-Tunisian Business Council met to review trade matters and stressed the need for highlighting the role of the private sectors in Tunisia and Jordan to help boost cooperation in investment projects and to increase trade.

## King stresses importance of democracy, respect for rights

(Continued from page 1)

from the suffering caused by the absence of freedom, and the widespread poverty, ignorance, despotism, oppression, and the marginalisation of the community in favour of the interests of an individual.

It may be high time for the Arab parties, singly or collectively, to review their progress, programmes, plans, and methods, to make compatible the new phase of our nation's history. It would be unwise for any of these parties to stay in unobtainable, reiterating the proposals and slogans that they had declared half a century ago or longer, disregarding the events and changes that have taken place in the world during the past numerous decades. These slogans have lost their meaning and become marginal in the new era.

Therefore, there is no alternative but to recast the new phase with attentiveness, objectivity, comprehensiveness, taking into consideration the specificity of the Arab conscience, and the psychological and cultural composition of the peoples of this nation, as well as their ambitions. In light of this reading, and with a clear and piercing vision of the desired future, these parties can synthesise their ethics and morals, formulate their plans and programmes, and arrange their pragmatic priorities. This can regain their credibility within their popular base, and spare them the mistakes of the past. It would save them from losing their way in the fog of romanticism, from plagiarism, and from any form of elitism to an external patron that would direct them to serve his own ends.

making them liable to clash with their environment and with others.

Some parties of the national movements, succeeded in their early days, in mobilising public opinion around the issue of independence. But later, the political elites were not able to lead Arab societies in the quest for development and progress. They failed to maintain the bridges that linked them with their popular base, as a result of their obsession with security, and their view that they had a right of tutelage over others, the right to confiscate their freedom, and the right to think for them. They forgot that any objectives, proposed by any authority in today's world, cannot be valued higher than human rights. Instead, such objectives should be derived from human rights, and they should be devoted to serve and further these rights.

Modernity, and keeping pace with our times, do not mean denying our principles or rescinding them. Isolationism, fanaticism, and immobility, do not, in any way, mean constancy and devotion to a cause, and sacrificing for it. The first condition for commitment is freedom of choice and acceptance of this choice. Freedom requires all to respect the principle of pluralism, and to distance themselves from the confiscation of the freedom of others, or their right to express their convictions and ideas. Freedom means that we should disavow ourselves of the notion that one party can claim an exclusive monopoly over truth, or to impose its ideology, or its will over others, under any pretext.

Every Arab citizen has the right to enjoy freedom. His rights must be respected. He must have the opportunity to participate in shaping his present and his future. He must feel safe for himself, his honour, and his dignity. He also has the right to select the platform through which to express himself, or the group which he feels would express his ambitions and ideas, in the context of responsible freedom, and commitment to the higher national good.

We in Jordan have sought, over the past years, to enhance our democratic process of which we are proud. We are keen to make it an example and a model. We seek to consolidate its foundations, and to open horizons before it. This we do, through our total conviction that this is the path that we have selected for ourselves, in freedom and good faith. We believe that it is one of the foundations for this country's strength, while it is based on the constitution, and while it derives inspiration from the spirit of the National Charter, which gained the consensus of all political and cultural tendencies in this country. We realised from the beginning that true democracy must be based on the separation between the legislative, executive, and judicial authorities, with each authority observing its limits, and not infringing on the others. We observed the necessity to hold parliamentary elections on time, in accordance with the law, and in a spirit of fairness, honest competition, and freedom of political action on the basis of pluralism that is committed to the principle of responsible national dialogue.

This process of democratisation permitted all our

people to participate, through their representatives in the Jordanian Chamber of Deputies, in taking many vital decisions. The most important of these decisions was the our choice to pursue peace within the Arab consensus, and through the peace process that was launched in Madrid. In doing so we were at peace with ourselves, and in harmony with the consensus of the entire Arab nation that opted for peace.

Since the start of this process, and until now, we have been careful to give all support to our Palestinian brothers and their sole legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and their leadership which was elected subsequently in their quest and struggle to regain their rights and to establish their state on their national soil. We shall continue to support them in every way we can, until they achieve all their ambitions, and until the peace process realises its objectives on all streams, to achieve a comprehensive, permanent, and just peace in the region. We do this through our commitment to the cause of our Arab nation, and our duty towards our Palestinian brothers, and the right of the peoples of this region, and their future generations, to a life in security, stability, and dignity.

Since its creation and until the present day, this country has been at the vanguard of its brothers, in defending the cause of its nation, its rights, and its unity. In doing to Jordan had to bear a burden far greater than its ability. It made immense sacrifices, willingly, and in good faith. It had to bear the conse-

## Randa Habib's corner

### No news is bad for the media

HAVE YOU noticed how silent the government is these days? For apart from rare statements concerning Israeli policies, nothing much is said, especially on the internal arena. Notwithstanding the saying which says "silence is gold," the current conspicuous lack of talk has gone beyond limits. I mean how would we know that we have a government if virtually a few of its 30 members talk?

What is even more stunning is that the 21 deputies/ministers (without counting the prime minister who is also an elected member of the House) have turned into silent participants under the dome, a far cry from their pre-ministerial outspoken stances. Observers look at deputies with portfolios as inactive forces whose role as legislators has undergone a "turning process".

Nevertheless, they are not the only members in the government to be completely mute. Rumour has it that the prime minister has given specific instructions to his fellow ministers not to venture into giving statements without a clear green light.

One has to appreciate that our young and dynamic PM has his own style. Taking into account the "errors" of previous governments, mostly coming from erroneous ministers' statements, the PM is playing it safe. After all, his cabinet is quite unique in that it comprises the highest number of "young and beautiful".

Well, it must be my journalistic side which could have caused short-sightedness and drove me to complain. But you see, in the media, safe means dull.

Anyhow, if you ask, as I did, ministers about the reason of this quiet, silent mood, they will answer: "Why are you complaining? No news is good news."

place on this Arab soil, that welcomed the vanguard of the Great Arab Revolt, led by my revolutionary grandfather, Sharif Hussein Ben Ali, to unify the nation, liberate it, and gain its independence. That revolt opened the door for the political parties that have been launched in the Arab world since the second decade of this century. The principles and sublime objectives of the Great Arab Revolt were the basic tenets and rallying cry of some of these parties. As a result, we have witnessed the noblest and most sublime form of unity, in which the Jordanian and Palestinian people merged together in a unity that forged them into one harmonious, tolerant, and cohesive family, on this blessed land.

Moreover, brothers, there is no alternative to democracy in our societies, at this crucial moment in our history. The only alternative is frustration, oppression, and chaos, which would lead to civil wars in which all are losers. Honesty requires us to put the fear of God in our hearts, and to give people their rights, to render unto each his due, and to manage their affairs in justice and equality, in observance of God's command: "God orders you to render unto each his due, and if you rule over the people, to rule justly."

I salute your noble Arab spirit, and I appreciate your concern for common Arab action. I pray to the Almighty God to grant us all success in our work for the good of the nation, and I reiterate my welcome to you, wishing you a good stay among us.

May God's peace and blessing be upon you.

## Amman forum seen as opportunity to advance efforts for Arab solidarity

(Continued from page 1)

Farhan stressed. He added that there would be a war soon, not a violent but a peaceful and strategic one, emphasising that "The Arab World should not be sacrificed for the cause of peace in the Middle East."

Other crucial topics which will be tackled during the three-day conference are the enhancement of democracy, human rights situation and methods of coordination among Arab political parties.

There is general consensus that such meetings should be held on a regular basis.

"I hope that we can establish a committee, formed by participants from all parties, to organise follow-up conferences and ensure continuous cooperation."

Lebanese delegate Joseph Kasseifi, representing the Falangist (Kata'eb) Party, told the Jordan Times.

Iraqi delegate Sa'ad Qasbi Hantouli from the Qasbi Ba'ath Socialist Party, said he did not assume that the conference to "reach a consensus over one subject."

The meeting in itself is "already a big result," he told the Jordan Times.

"I see this conference as an occasion for a dialogue between all political directions, from rightists over leftists to Islamists," Mr. Kasseifi added.

He stressed that all parties in the Arab World were facing the same problems, such as the lack of freedom of opinion and dissatisfaction of human rights situation.

He expected the conference to issue a commu-

niqué covering topics such as the Israeli occupation of a border strip in South Lebanon, and the Golan Heights and the embargo imposed on Libya by the United Nations.

Mr. Hantouli stressed that the participating parties represent a variety of ideas and thus create a chance to discuss cooperation among the parties.

He also wanted that the conference should not consist of speeches with "big words but no (concrete) results."

Mr. Hammoudi acknowledged at the same time that he does not expect the meeting to come up with solutions to all problems discussed.

"That is why we have to continue with such gatherings in the future," he added.

Here is the list of partici-

pants to the conference:

Lebanon: Abdullah Kassi and Mohammad Kassi from the Arab Socialist Baath Party; Salah Ajam, Abdul Hadi Hamdani and Mahmoud Ayyad from the General People's Congress.

Iraq: Sa'doun Shaker, Saad Hammoudi and Taha Basri from the Arab Socialist Baath Party.

Libya: Salem Dali, Ali Mariya, Faraj Ne'meh and Tayyeb Masrati from the Revolutionary Brotherhood movement.

Syria: Ahmad Dirgham and Ali Hassan from the Arab Socialist Baath Party; Safwan Qudsi, Burhan Sahmi and Bara'a Qudsi from the Socialist Arab Union party; Wisal Bikkash, Saleh Buttat and Mohammad Hamadeh from the Syrian Communist Party; Youssef Faisal, Adnan

Kizawan and Najmaddin Khrein from the Communist party; Ahmad As'ad, Fadlallah Nassereddin and Munir Ali from the Socialist Democratic Unionist Party; Fayed Ismail, Muharram Tabura and Adnan Baradit from the Socialist Unionist Party, and Ahmad al Ahmad and Tareq Okash from the Arab Socialist Movement.

Morocco: Abdul Karim Ghallab from Al Istiklal party; Mohammad Mas-moudi and Daqqaq Habib from the Constitutional Union; Abdul Wahed Ben Masoud from the National Liberal Coalition; and Khaled Nasser from the Progress and Socialist Party.

Tunisia: Abdul Rahman Talibi from the Socialist Democratic Party.

Algeria: Amerto

Takhamin from the National Liberation Front.

Sudan: Salah Fadni from the Political Organisation.

Palestine: Abbas Zaki, Salah Ta'muri and Mohammad Araj from Fateh, Ibrahim Ghosheh, and Mohammad Nazzal from Hamas; Abdul Rahman Mulawah, Tayseer Qubaa, Laith Khaled, Ali Saleh and Ali Abdul Wahed from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP); Daoud Tahami, Nayef Muhanna and Mohammad Jaddallah from the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP); Fuad Riza, Mohammad Abu Shama and Bassam Salhi from FIDA; and Sideh Ra'fat, Azmi Shueibi and Hassan Qawasme from the Palestinian Peoples Party.



# 1997: Asia, Europe and Mideast likely to do OK ; recession in Israel

NEW YORK (AP) — China's takeover of the Asian financial hub of Hong Kong will test the former British colony's free market and continued attachment to liberal economics.

Also in 1997, economists also foresee economic recoveries in mainland China and Japan, and efforts by Asia's Tigers — South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore — to overcome a slowdown in growth and exports.

In Europe, the 15-nation European Union expects a moderate economic year with little inflationary pressure, while Russia hopes 1997 will bring economic growth for the first time since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

After a lackluster decade, Arab countries reported strong economic growth in 1996, and the trend is expected to continue into 1997 and beyond.

But Israel, after five years in which its economy expanded more than 40 per cent, faces recession, rising unemployment and a record trade deficit.

Latino America, from Mexico to Argentina, is poised for growth as governments dismantle more state monopolies and knock down trade barriers.

The U.S. economy — paced by a stock market which rose 25 per cent in 1996 (as of Dec. 6), following 1995's 33 per cent gain — is slowing down from its sizzling early-1996 pace. But economists say there appears to be no danger that the slowdown could turn into a recession.

Overall, the world's economy has continued to slow down in 1996, with growth sluggish despite an upswing in world trade. The volume of world merchandise trade was forecast to increase by seven per cent over 1995, when exports were worth \$4.9 trillion, the World Trade Organisation said.

This also has been a year in which fantastic deals became reality, with more likely to follow in 1997.

Cross-border mergers and acquisitions shattered records in the first nine months of 1996, and the deal frenzy spilled into the fourth quarter with the British Telecommunications' \$20.8 billion planned acquisition of MCI Communications.

The companies announced on Nov. 3 an agreement to create a combined company called Concert, which would provide communications services worldwide.

Purchasers spent \$181.7 billion in the first nine months of the year, before the British Telecom-MCI megadeal — the largest foreign acquisition of a U.S. company — was announced.

Low worldwide interest rates and lofty global stock markets — in Hong Kong, Australia, Canada, Germany and Britain — together with healthy economic conditions in most of the developed world, helped fuel such deals.

In Asia, still the world's fastest-growing economic area, the biggest development will be the July 1 return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty.

For Beijing, the economic impact of this transition is uncertain. China has promised not to raid the territory's rich coffers and to allow it at least 50 years of relative autonomy under the current capitalist system. In 1996, Hong Kong's stock market gained about 32 per cent in value and hit repeated highs as the economy showed signs of recovering from the previous year's slump.

Mainland China, meanwhile, enjoyed a "soft landing" from the overheated heights of recent years, using a tight credit policy to reduce inflation from 17 per cent in 1995 to about

6.5 per cent in 1996. Economic growth is expected to remain under 10 per cent, in line with the government's target.

China also hopes to join the World Trade Organisation in the first half of 1997, but the country has been urged to do more to open its domestic markets to imports.

In other expected developments in 1997:

— In Japan, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto has promised widespread reforms to boost the economy, particularly the troubled financial sector. Japan has been struggling to emerge from an economic slump, which began in early 1992, with the aid of fiscal stimulus measures and rock-bottom interest rates, but neither have had a major effect yet.

— Asia's fastest-growing economies, meanwhile, are having to cope with an economic chill that is blowing through the region, trimming export and growth rates at the renowned Asian tiger economies of Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan.

Emerging rivals such as Indonesia, the Philippines and India are beginning to challenge them on their own turf — forcing the maturing economies to go higher-tech and squeezing more productivity out of each worker.

— In the European Union (EU) countries, growth is forecast at a healthy 2.3 per cent, up from an estimated 1.6 per cent in 1996, and inflation is expected to fall from 2.6 per cent to an acceptable 2.2 per cent. The dark cloud, as it has been for the past 15 years, is unemployment, which probably will average 10.8 per cent.

All eyes are on Jan. 1, 1999, when a common EU currency called the euro is scheduled to come into being. To qualify, however, countries must have budget

deficits of three per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) or less, government debt of 60 per cent or less of GDP, and moderate inflation.

Meeting those criteria — and even more difficult, keeping them in the future — will be one of the main preoccupations of EU governments in 1997.

In eastern Europe, some former communist countries — the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary — have moved closer to their goal of joining NATO and the EU.

Russian economy shrank around six per cent in 1996, but after years of sky-high inflation, the government reduced the figure to some 20 per cent and hopes to bring it down further in 1997. Russia's first Eurobond issue since the 1917 Bolshevik revolution was a big success in November, allowing Moscow to raise \$1 billion over five years.

— In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a champion of small government, promises to sell off billions of dollars worth of state companies in 1997, including the El Al airline and the major banks. But the plans are stymied by the weak economy and dormant stock market.

— In Latin America, powerhouse economies of Brazil, Argentina and Mexico — though burdened by high unemployment — dwarf the output of countries in Central America, the Caribbean and parts of South America. Peru, Venezuela and Colombia lie in-between — developing rapidly but still battling widespread poverty. Colombia in 1997 faces the added threat of economic sanctions from the United States because of the drug-tainted administration of President Ernesto Samper.

— In the United States, the National Association of Business Economists predicts that economic performance over the next five years should look much like the past five years — moderate growth averaging 2.5 per cent and inflation just under 2.9

## Egypt, Libya and Jordan to link electrical grids next autumn

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt, Libya and Jordan will merge their electrical grids in September in a step toward united Arab and Arab-European electrical networks, Egyptian Electricity Minister Maher Abaza said Sunday.

"The electrical link-up between Egypt and Libya and between Egypt and Jordan will take place at the beginning of September," Mr. Abaza said after talks in Cairo with the secretary for the Libyan General People's Committee for Energy, Abdallah Al-Badri. The two links will open the way for an "electrical link between the Mid-

dle East and North Africa" which will then be "connected to the European electrical network through Spain in the west and Turkey in the east," he added.

In September, Mr. Abaza said the electrical link with Jordan and Libya would occur in June 1997. He did not give the reason Sunday for the delay, but said that the electrical connections with Libya would cost \$46 million.

The Middle Eastern electrical grid is to extend to Syria, Turkey and Iraq and the North African grid will include Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

**HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1996**  
By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) You can easily make new acquaintances today, which will make your personal and business life more rewarding. Your intuitive perceptions are fine, so later this evening follow their prompting and you will be successful.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) This is a good day today to make the right arrangements with your mate and have long, fruitful discussions. Later this evening you will be able to discuss with fellow associates your plan of action for great success.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) Be more willing to accept advice or suggestions from outside fellow associates. Add to the prestige you enjoy at this time and you can make your career activities more prestigious and gain recognition from a bigwig.

**MOON CHILDREN:** (June 22 to July 21) Plan your career activities for the rest of the week carefully and you can gain recognition from those in authority. Show more affection for your loved ones later this evening and you can gain much appreciation from them.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) This is a good day to enjoy recreation today and to plan for additional ones in the days ahead. Be enthused and you can have fun with your mate in those activities which you both will enjoy and want to participate in.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) You can discuss problematical affairs with your loved ones today, and solve them, provided you do not lose your temper. Later this evening you can visit with close friends and have a wonderful time being to their company.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) This is a good day to visit as many individuals as you can for whatever good purpose, either business or personal. Later this evening would be a good time to meet with knowledgeable people and discuss ways you make your career more productive.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) Study into newspapers and other periodicals today which can give you wise data about greater abundance for the days ahead. Later this evening will be good for you to go out on the town with your mate and have fun.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) You can get into whatever can help you to expand in your career activities and start to reap the benefits from your efforts. This evening will be a good time for you to meet with a bigwig and discuss your opportunities for success.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) Be with an expert today and quietly get advice you need to get a new project completed on time and under budget. Buy a little gift for your loved one which will be appreciated and make him or her more affectionate.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) This is a good day today to see as many persons as you can for whatever your purpose and get good results which can be prosperous. Later this evening will be a good time to get together with close friends and go out on the town.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) Get in touch today with influential people who can make things easier for you in the days ahead. Gain their backing and support so that you can make your career activities successful and prosperous.

**Birthstone of December:** Turquoise — Zircon.

REUTERS

REUTERS

### The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLS	FRF
US Dollar	1.5534	0.6024	1.3270	113.89	1.3658	1529.76	1.7426	5.2443	
DE Mark	0.6437	1.0000	0.3874	0.8542	73.33	0.8788	984.09	1.1218	3.3742
GB Sterling	1.6600	2.5778	1.0000	2.2041	169.03	2.2872	2539.40	2.6927	6.7055
CH Franc	0.7536	117.03	0.4538	1.0000	85.45	1.0285	1151.67	131.30	3.9488
JP Yen	0.0068	1.3821	0.5282	1.1634	1.0000	1.1979	13.42	152.85	4.8008
CA Dollar	0.7322	1.1416	0.4430	0.9718	1.20	1.0000	1123.88	1.2607	3.8459
IT Lira	0.0007	1.0144	0.3932	0.0867	1344.27	0.6921	1.0000	11.38	3.4236
NL Guilder	0.5739	89.07	0.3453	76.14	55.34	0.7834	877.31	1.0000	3.0065
FR Franc	0.1907	0.2593	0.1148	25.3124	21.70	0.2605	33.25	33.2500	1.0000

Energy		
Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	24.05	23.95
WTI	24.70	24.40
Bony	24.05	23.95
Dubai	21.27	20.83
UL Gas	206.00	206.00

Mid-East Currencies					
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2688	0.4144	0.1609	0.3508	30.4025
AE Dirham	0.2725	0.4244	0.1649	0.3679	31.0684
KW Dinar	3.3333	5.18135	2.00884	4.42674	380.084
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.12201	1.59847	3.52237	302.48
CY Pound	2.122	3.2985	1.2783	2.8176	241.844

Metal Prices		
Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz)	389	388.5
Silver (oz)	4.8	4.82
Platinum (oz)	368	367
Al (3 Months)	1509	1511
CU (3 Months)	2108	2107
Zinc (3 Months)	1051	1052
Lead (3 Months)	889	890
Ni (3 Months)	8580	8600

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)						
Period	1	3	6	9	12	Year
Cncy	Month	Months	Months	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.48	5.43	5.48	5.55	5.62	
GBP	8.08	6.18	6.58	6.50	6.66	
JPY	0.17	0.21	0.31	0.31	0.37	
DEM	3.18	3.13	3.16	2.97	3.20	
FRF	3.33	3.33	3.34	3.35	3.21	
CHF	1.87	1.81	1.81	1.81	1.87	
ITL	7.38	7.08	6.73	6.62	6.44	

Main Equity Indices						
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low
New York	DOW JONES	6334.09	29.22	0.46	6335.81	6304.87
New York	S&P 500	1330.79	2.15	0.3	1332.68	1328.54
London	FT-SE 100	3981	8.8	0.22	3983.8	3972.4
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	20422.04	80.65	0.4	20472.1	20391.3
Paris	CAC 40	2216.28	12.87	0.58	2230.52	2208.44
Frankfurt	DAX	2855.79	56.08	2	2856.79	2837.24

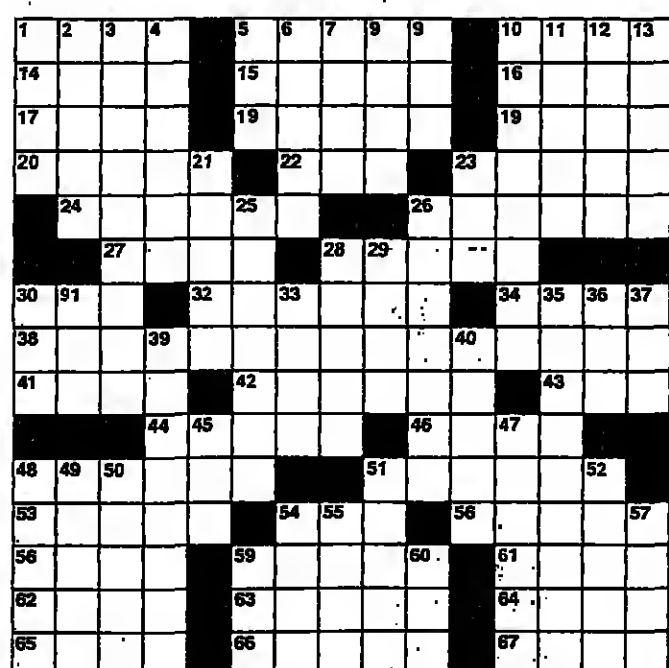
Energy		
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	116.58	Spot
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1370	Spot
Sugar (\$/ton)	307	Spot
Wheat (\$/ton)	128	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	21.75	Spot
Tea (\$/kg)	125	Spot
Barley (\$/ton)	215	Spot
Rice (\$/ton)	470	Spot

JOD Cross Rates		
Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1743	1.1802
DE Mark	0.4548	0.4571
CH Franc	0.534	0.5367
FR Franc	0.1349	0.1358
JP Yen	0.0211	0.0242
NL Guilder	0.4084	0.4074
IT Lira	0.4624	0.4647

\* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

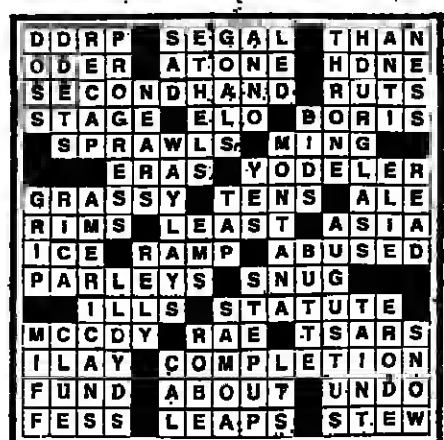
## THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS**
- "Never tell —" (Solon)
  - Tie up
  - Hurry-up letters
  - Literature Nobel
  - Practice fly ball
  - Italian resort
  - Lends a hand
  - Giant
  - Journey by ox wagon
  - Clean thoroughly
  - Rocky peak
  - Kind of paper
  - Abrade
  - Steads
  - Zeus' wife
  - It may establish innocence
  - "— my brother's keeper?"
  - Wastes away
  - Mein or top
  - UN's main governing body
  - Flair
  - Type of tenk
  - Pub potion
  - In the works
  - Meadow sounds
  - Four-legged creature
  - Misrepresents
  - Troglodyte
  - Conjunctive
  - Violinist Mischa
  - "M for Murder"
  - Now
  - Carson's successor
  - Fish-eating bird
  - Active
  - Division word
  - Requisite
  - Ossa
  - The Man



by Alan Olschwang

- DOWN**
- Amo, —, amal
  - Those not of the cloth
  - Laos' peninsula
  - Make certain
  - Newt
  - Completely
  - Biblical preposition
  - Culture medium
  - Horror star, Chaney
  - Generosity
  - Circs, for one
  - Posessing manual dexterity
  - Pig holders?
  - Harder to find
  - Male swan
  - Sun cover
  - Projectile
  - Make the necessary adjustments
  - "— we forget"
  - Reason, for one
  - Blanc or Torne
  - Bread spread
  - A lowering in esteem
  - Under the weather
  - Caustic liquid
  - Painted in a way
  - Eleve's place
  - Wide's companion
  - Movie's Bruce
  - He finally spoke for himself
  - Bets —
  - Silly
  - Indian soldier
  - Clara or Claus
  - contandere
  - Norse war god
  - Showdown — time?
  - A Hunter
  - Affirmative



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## Peanuts



## Andy Capp



## Mutt'n'Jeff





December 17, 1996  
HOROSCOPE  
FOR TUESDAY  
DECEMBER 17, 1996

# Corporate America embraces Internet Commerce

LOS ANGELES (R) — No more fun and games. The Internet is getting down to business. Internet Commerce is the latest, biggest buzz in corporate America, with thousands of companies lining up to buy and sell online, and hundreds more ready to provide the tools to get them there.

The obstacles are daunting, but if optimists' predictions come true, the Internet could become the biggest marketplace on the globe by the beginning of the next century, an electronic bazaar that will change forever the landscape of domestic and international trade.

"The net has created an open market for anyone who wanted to jump in," said Jay Tenenbaum, chairman of CommerceNet, the Internet Commerce consortium.

Internet Commerce involves retailers selling music CDs, flowers or books on the worldwide web, and consumers paying for them from virtual wallets with secured credit cards, digital dollars and electronic cheques.

Investors can buy stock through online brokers and bank customers can log on to move funds from current to savings accounts, and pay their bills. Companies can use the Internet to reach suppliers and customers and transfer purchasing, distribution and other corporate functions onto intranets.

Because Internet Commerce encompasses so many things, it is hard to determine exactly how large a market it is, or will be.

Today, business-to-business transactions account for the biggest piece of the electronic-commerce pie. Revenue from corporate

E-commerce could explode to \$13.4 billion next year, from \$2.8 billion in 1996, according to a poll of 1,100 commercial web sites by Activemedia, an Internet researcher based in Peterborough, New Hampshire.

Online retailing, merchandise sales to the public from stores on the web and online services, should reach \$6.6 billion by 2000 from \$518 million this year, according to Forrester Research, from Cambridge, Massachusetts.

But electronic commerce isn't there yet. Most consumers still shun using credit cards

online, despite studies that show electronic transactions are less susceptible to fraud than offline purchases. Privacy is another big concern.

Early Internet stores and online malls were unattractive, disorganized, understocked and lacking conveniences such as online ordering. It is no surprise that shopping ranked last in a recent advertising age poll of Internet users' online activities, well behind news gathering and E-mail.

On the merchant side, off-the-shelf solutions for building Internet storefronts were non-existent

until the past six months. Web-based business is still hampered by lack of infrastructure and standards, regulatory constraints and societal barriers, according to an electronic-commerce study conducted by consultants Arthur D. Little and the Giga Information Group.

The Internet industry is working double time to remove these impediments.

In recent months, a "who's who" of Internet giants has announced a dizzying array of products meant to smooth the way for retailers, direct-mail marketers and others itching to get wired. Offerings include hosting services from ATT, MCI, IBM, BBN and others who will create and run a company's web business.

Companies that want to run their own transaction-based web sites can buy software building blocks from Netscape, Microsoft, Open Market, Connect Corp. and dozens of second-tier competitors.

Among the latest brace of announcements, Oracle said it would begin selling a line of web commerce servers next year, competing against Netscape and Microsoft, which has announced that it expects to start shipping web-commerce software in December.

Commerce servers are software packages that turn a high-performance workstation into a web site capable of handling online transactions and associated billing, security and customer-service functions.

To deal with perceived fears of the Internet not being safe, ATT, America Online and other cyber-space mall managers are guaranteeing credit cards against theft, promising that if card data is stolen while customers shop, the companies will pay the \$50 liability deductible if credit-card issuers don't cover it.

No America Online subscriber has ever had credit-card information stolen while shopping online, but company officials are offering the guarantee as a security blanket.

In another effort to bolster public trust, the non-profit Electronic Frontier Foundation and CommerceNet, the Internet Commerce trade group, have announced EnTrust, a set of stringent privacy guidelines for online merchants due in the first quarter of 1997.

Meanwhile, dozens of banks and merchants have endorsed the set standard for secured credit-card transactions created by a consortium led by MasterCard and Visa. Financial institutions are currently testing set protocols with an eye to building the safety procedures into the electronic payment services they offer merchant next year.

Other companies are devising online payment mechanisms that will one day fill in for cash.

Market leader Cybercash has struck deals with Netscape, Oracle, America Online, Sun Microsystems, Checkfree, CompuServe and others to distribute the company's virtual wallet or build it into their respective commerce software.

Cybercash has already distributed 700,000 virtual wallets, which, by the end of the year, will contain secured credit cards, electronic cheques, and Mondex's smart card. Wallets will also contain a form of pocket change called cybercoins consumers can use to buy a single newspaper story, play a video game or download a software upgrade.

Cybercash rivals Digital and First Virtual are marketing their own electronic payment schemes. Other companies are developing keyboard- or built-in smart-card readers that consumers could use to make purchases from their PCs.

Despite these efforts, it could be years, even decades, before the public embraces alternatives to cold, hard cash, paper checks and plastic cards.

"It isn't something customers are begging for," said Bill Rollinson, marketing vice president at Internet Shopping Network. "Something like this almost takes a generation to assimilate."

Likewise, it is doubtful that consumers will adjust shortly to shopping online for clothes and other items that they like to touch or try on before they buy.

However, a growing number of virtual companies selling computer, software, music, books, flowers, wine, gifts and other specialty items are already seeing revenue grow, and in some cases, turning a handsome profit.

The next big thing in online sales could be information consumers buy a la carte and receive digitally. CommerceNet chairman Tenenbaum believes that by 2000, half of all software sold will be downloaded rather than delivered in a shrink-wrapped box.

"The economics are absolutely compelling," he said.

**Daily Beat**

*A review of news from the Arabic press*

**Jordan Gulf Insurance Company records JD305,000 loss**

**\*\* AFTER APPROVING** the balance sheet and the profit and loss statement for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1996, the general assembly of the Jordan Gulf Insurance Company requested the controller of insurance at the Ministry of Industry and Trade to reconsider the premium for the obligatory third party vehicle insurance which under no circumstance corresponds to the volume of paid claims (compensation). Responding to the request, the controller announced the formation of a new committee to reconsider the "prices" of this type of insurance which has resulted in JD1.4 million in losses to the insurance companies in the Kingdom last year. The losses in 1994 amounted to JD1.8 million.

Noting that the ministry's keenness to amend the premium for the third party vehicle insurance is in line with the rise in the cases of reckless driving, the insurance official urged the companies to cooperate by providing accurate and very detailed figures on the vehicle insurance business to help formulate a study reflecting the situation in the market in order to tighten control on vehicle insurance.

According to the financial results of the Jordan Gulf Insurance Company, the loss resulting from the obligatory third party vehicle insurance was around JD305,000. The company's board chairman, Ibrahim Al Ayed, told the general assembly that the loss incurred in the 1995/1996 financial year was due to many factors, the most important of which was the rise in the number of car accidents to a record figure and the paid claims that the company had to pay in compensation. This factor becomes more important when the profit and loss statement shows that the company earned JD6.2 million in total premiums of which JD3.4 million, or 55 per cent, were from the vehicle department. Another factor for the loss was given by Mr. Al Ayed to be the recession at the stock market which he described as "an important arm for investments by insurance companies."

Other financial data showed that the Jordan Gulf Insurance Company earned a total of JD1.86 million from marine premiums which ranked as second highest generator of income. In third place was income from the life department followed by the general accidents and life departments. The company maintains technical reserves amounting to JD1.59 million and has a total shareholders' equity of JD2.35 million.

Mr. Al Ayed told the general assembly that the board of directors intends to raise the company's capital to JD2 million as required by the law. Such an increase will be generated from the company's assets and without requesting any payment from the shareholders. Mr. Al Ayed concluded (Al Aswag).

**Subscribers to cellular phone service will not receive food coupons**

**\*\*ALL SUBSCRIBERS** to the cellular phone service and persons who benefited from leasing such a service have been considered in the high-income category and have been excluded from receiving food coupons in 1997 (Al Aswag).

**THE BETTER HALF.** By Glasbergen

"At 6:13 P.M., I said, 'I love you,' then you said, 'I love you, too.' So next time it's your turn to say it first."

**JUMBLE** THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Anglin

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

KANLY  
ARYRA  
RANCOB  
LUBEBB

Print answer here:

Yesterday's Jumbles: YODEL RUSTY TANKER KIDNAP  
Answer: How the travel agent sold trips to Istanbul - HE TALKED TURKEY

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER - JORDAN - SINGIRANI											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 16/12/1996											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
259,500	205,000	ARAB BANK	13.9	1.37	2	40	12200	285.00	285.00	-	
3,800	2,900	BANK OF JORDAN	11.2	0.00	3	120	267	3.05	3.10	-0.05	
5,280	4,250	THE HOUSING BK.	12.7	2.91	4	1772	8414	4.65	4.75	-0.10	
3,040	2,440	JOR. RENT BANK	19.1	0.00	9	957	2430	2.50	2.62	-0.12	
1,200	880	JOR. GULF BANK	5.7	7.29	7	2820	2693	0.97	0.96	-0.01	
4,180	3,480	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	17.7	0.00	18	4112	15188	3.70	2.69	-0.05	
3,290	1,400	UNION OR. SAV. INV.	9	0.00	1	2000	2820	2.48	2.48	-	
3,380	1,800	BEIT AL-HAL (BEITNA)	1.1	0.33	1	250	450	1.82	1.80	-0.02	
1,590	1,000	PHILADEL. INV. OR.	9	0.00	3	1000	1220	1.30	1.32	-0.02	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS											
2,910	1,820	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.7	9.95	7	1450	2895	1.98	2.01	-0.05	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS											
1,900	1,450	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	11.3	7.36	42	28499	45814	1.65	1.62	-0.02	
6,950	6,000	VEHICLE OWNERS FED.	10.6	5.83	2	110	660	6.00	1.00	-	
1,960	1,380	JOR. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	23	8600	10347	1.21	1.21	-	
1,050	870	REAL ESTATE INV.	19.3	4.28	1	150	121	0.87	0.87	-	
1,260	580	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	33.4	0.00	2	500	328	0.65	0.65	-	
1,800	490	HACH. EXP. REHT. HAIN.	9	0.00	2	450	212	0.49	0.47	-0.02	
2,300	1,490	HIG. EAST HOTELS	67.2	0.00	9	3400	5304	1.49	1.56	-0.07	
3,720	3,130	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	12.6	5.80	4	1300	4488	2.45	2.45	-	
1,270	960	JARNA EDUCATION	9	0.00	5	2100	2452	1.07	1.07	-	
2,430	1,690	UNIFIED CO.	11.3	6.67	134	75250	158780	2.04	2.14	-0.10	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS											
2,770	3,060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.0	2.86	11	18250	63870	3.50	3.50	-	
3,550	2,710	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	25.0	0.00	8	17098	55565	3.28	3.25	-	
6,000	4,950	ARAB POTASH CO.	17.6	2.45	6	6000	34880	5.80	5.80	-	
10,550	7,720	JOR. PETROLEUM REFINERY	9.8	8.30	3	1351	960	9.64	9.64	-0.04	
1,590	1,150	WOOLLEN INDUSTRIES	56.4	0.00	5	639	809	1.27	1.27	-	
3,750	1,650	INDUSTRIAL COM. AGH.	40.2	0.00	8	1419	4222	2.85	2.89	-0.14	
4,870	3,040	ARAB PHARM. HAFIF.	20.1	5.46	18	4689	17014	3.59	2.66	-0.93	
6,450	5,650	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	7.7	4.03	1	150	930	8.20	8.20	-	
8,000	4,150	OAR ALHAMA BV. INV.	13.4	4.08	2	200	980	4.87	4.90	-0.03	
5,800	3,130	ARAB ALUM. IND.	8.6	0.00	3	840	2913	2.47	3.47	-1.00	
1,960	1,450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9	0.00	49	55950	36976	0.63	0.64	-0.01	
1,500	1,060	ARAB PAPER CONV. TRD.	8.0	8.78	7	1450	1713	1.16	1.18	-0.02	
1,850	1,210	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9	0.00	1	2500	3175	1.27	1.27	-	
1,090	540	NATIONAL INDOS.	10.1	8.82	66	88900	60382	0.65	0.68	-0.03	
1,840	730	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	47	26250	30488	1.14	1.16	-0.02	
4,700	4,430	ALADITH CO.	19.2	3.50	1	200	686	3.42	3.43	-0.01	
4,250	1,190	NATL. CARBIDE WTR. REFC.	13.2	0.00	5	1550	3803	2.40	2.50	-0.10	
1,350	570	JOR. SUGAR CO.	9	0.00	5	1350	1127	0.80	0.84	-0.04	
1,910	1,060	ARAB FERTILIZER	20.3	0.28	14	1150	2419	1.48	1.51	-0.03	
3,280	1,440	UNIV. MODN. INDOS.	5.4	11.17	18	8400	15020	1.76	1.79	-0.03	
2,100	1,240	JOR. INDOS. RESOURCES	16.6	0.00	22	14300	18932	1.31	1.32	-0.01	
1,880	890	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	37.4	0.00	20	12400	15268	0.99	1.01	-0.02	
1,460	1,080	INTL. TOBACCO	29.4	0.00	29	22550	27803	1.21	1.25	-0.04	
1,730	930	UNION CH. & VEG.	25.6	0.00	20	11050	11392	1.00	1.04	-0.04	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS											
INDEX: 116.47	INDEX: 116.47	INDEX: 116.47	INDEX: 116.47	INDEX: 116.47	INDEX: 116.47	INDEX: 116.47	INDEX: 116.47	INDEX: 116.47	INDEX: 116.47	INDEX: 116.47	INDEX: 116.47
GRAND TOTAL	INDEX: 153.24	INDEX: 153.24	INDEX: 153.24	INDEX: 153.24	INDEX: 153.24	INDEX: 153.24	INDEX: 153.24	INDEX: 153.24	INDEX: 153.24	INDEX: 153.24	INDEX: 153.24
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 16/12/1996											
H	800	510	JOR. TRADE FNC.	14.7	0.00	8	6000	3300	0.55	0.55	-
H	950	440	NATL. CONCR. CENTERS	9	0.00	6	5500	2525	0.46	0.46	-
H	930	700	UNION INV. 50%	68.9	0.00	7	8000	1350	0.73	0.72	-0.01
H	1,110	370	ARAB FERTIL.	9	0.00	15	12100	5083	0.44	0.46	-0.02
H	1,050	900	UNITED FOR FINAN. INV.	9	0.00	2	10250	8713	0.90	0.85	-0.05
H	860	510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	6	3100	2009	0.62	0.65	-0.03
H	1,760	1,300	NATL. CEMENT	9	0.00	11	5100	7315	1.40	1.40	-
H	1,000	520	NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	12	8500	5033	0.59	0.59	-
H	1,100	400	NATL. MULT. ENG. NANO	9	0.00	28	52700	28713	0.47	0.49	-0.02
H	810	430	RAYZAR OILS & HOULDS	9	0.00	2	500	255	0.49	0.51	-0.02
H	1,080	750	JORDAN STEEL	9	0.00	6	4250	3188	0.65	0.65	-
H	1,330	1,020	UNION TOBACCO 75%	9	0.00	2	124	98	1.06	1.05	-0.01
H	840	750	RASY PHARM. 65%	9	0.00	2	2870	746	0.61	0.62	-0.01
H	820	590	INDOS. ENG.	26.5	0.00	12	10750	4593	0.42	0.42	-
H	900	580	PEARL SAN. P. CONVE.	9	0.00	4	1900	1179	0.60	0.62	-0.02
H	1,500	530	HID. EAST COMPLEX	7.9	0.00	19	17600	15726	0.66	0.67	-0.01
GRAND TOTAL											
147	146344	82804									
* New 12 months low											

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## Webber plays like warrior in paying back Golden State

OAKLAND, California (R)

Former warrior Chris Webber had a triple-double of 19 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists as the Washington Bullets ran their winning streak to three games with a 110-102 win Sunday over Golden State.

Rod Strickland had 22 points and 15 assists and Juwan Howard added 20 points for the bullets.

"Somebody gave me a good quote. They said when the fans get on you, feed off of it," said Webber, who was booed everytime he touched the ball.

"I tried to go the whole game without letting any emotions show. I think I got better controlling my emotions, but I will always want

to beat the franchise name."

Latrell Sprewell had a career-high 43 points for Golden State, which has lost five of its last seven games.

"We did not give (Sprewell) much support tonight," said Golden State's Chris Mullin. "We did not play defence like we are capable of doing."

In Portland, the high-flying Rockets were without Charles Barkley, but Hakeem Olajuwon and Clyde Drexler took up the slack to lead NBA-best Houston to a 99-89 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers.

Olajuwon scored 26 points and grabbed 10

rebounds and Drexler added

22 points for the Rockets, who are 11-1 on the road and have the best record in the NBA at 21-2.

Kenny Anderson had 26 points and 10 assists and Arvydas Sabonis collected 18 points and nine rebounds for Portland, who have lost five of their last eight.

Kevin Willis started in place of Barkley, out with a sprained ankle, and pulled down 13 rebounds.

In Phoenix, Robert Horry scored a season-high 19 points, highlighting a big effort by the Phoenix bench, as the Suns defeated the Vancouver Grizzlies 103-84 for their sixth win in seven

games.

Kevin Johnson added 16 points and seven assists for the Suns, who sent Vancouver to their 12th loss in 13 road games.

Phoenix's reserves outscored the Grizzlies' bench, 60-14. Horry collected his points in just 20 minutes, while Sam Cassell added 15 off the bench.

"It's a matter of timing. Some nights, you're going to shoot good, some nights you're not. Tonight I was feeling good and kept shooting," Horry said. "It ain't often you get that feeling."

Rookie Shareef Abdul-Rahim had career highs of 28 points and 14 rebounds

for Vancouver.

In Detroit, Joe Dumars scored seven of his 15 points in a second-quarter run and the Detroit Pistons held the Boston Celtics without a basket for almost nine minutes in a 99-89 victory, their sixth in seven games.

Grant Hill had 25 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists for the Pistons, who improved to 10-2 at home and kept Boston winless on the road. The Celtics fell to 0-9 away from home.

David Wesley scored 25 points and Rick Fox added 17 for Boston, which managed just five free throws for an 8:54 stretch of the second quarter and fell behind by 17 points.



Al Orthodoxi

## FIRST DIVISION BASKETBALL Ahli, Orthodoxi top standings

By Roufan Nahhas  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Al Orthodoxi and Al Ahli pushed their way up to share the first place with seven points each at the conclusion of Sunday's matches in the final stage of the First Division Basketball Championship.

Al Orthodoxi is temporarily leading on score difference after an easy 93-55 win over Al Jalil.

Al Ahli overcame an 11-point difference in the first half to defeat Al Jazireh 79-72 (35-44) in a heated match which concluded late Sunday after Al Jazireh topped the standings at the end of last week's matches.

Al Ahli depended on Marwan Saeedi to take the match into their own hands, especially after a strong start by Al Jazireh, which led 7-2 in the early

moments of the match. Al Ahli never relented and managed to make it 7-7, thanks to the efforts of Ramez Hammoud.

Both teams reached to another tie (30-30) in the first half until Al Jazireh took the lead again to end it 44-35.

In the second half Al Jazireh's performance was influenced by the many fouls by its players.

Meanwhile, Al Ahli kept the pressure against their opponents and took the lead for the first time in the second half 61-60 and then 65-64 to end the match 79-72.

On the other hand, Al Orthodoxi had an easier task, humbling Irbid's Al

Jaleel 93-55. Al Orthodoxi played with confidence taking the lead from the beginning and leaving Al Jaleel in a dilemma, especially after the score turned 24-6 early in the first half.

In the second half Al Orthodoxi appeared more relaxed and satisfied with the result and depended on Ihab Emsieh who topped the scoring list.

## Schedule:

Wed. 18/12:  
Orthodoxi-Jazireh 6:15 p.m.  
Ahli-Jaleel 8:00p.m.

## Standings after Sunday's matches

Team	P	W	L	SF	SA	PTS
Orthodoxi	2	3	1	30.4	25.5	7
Ahli	2	3	1	28.3	26.2	7
Jazireh	2	2	2	28.2	26.4	6
Jaleel	2	-	4	23.2	32.6	4

## Damon Hill wins British award

LONDON (AFP)

Britain's Formula One world champion Damon Hill was voted BBC television's 'sports personality of the year' here Sunday.

The viewers put four-times Olympic rowing champion Steve Redgrave second and jockey Frankie Dettori third. Redgrave won the team award with partner Matthew Pinsent.

The 36-year-old Hill, who received the trophy from last year's winner, triple-jumper Jonathan Edwards, said: "This has really made my year."

The 'Overseas Personality Award' was shared between world heavyweight boxing champion Evander Holyfield and sprint king Michael Johnson.

## Southampton manager victim of hoax caller

LONDON (R)

So many foreigners are now playing in England there seemed nothing out of the ordinary when Southampton manager Graeme Souness took a call from George Weah recommending his friend Ali Dia for a trial.

Dia, said the caller, was a Senegalese international who had played for Paris St Germain and Bologna.

In fact, Souness was about to fall victim to "soccer's con-trick of the decade", according to one Sunday tabloid.

Southampton gave Dia a

brief trial, obtained his international clearance on Nov. 22 and a day later he made his Premier League debut for the Saints against Leeds, coming on as a 32nd minute substitute for the injured Matthew le Tissier.

But Dia's display was one of such staggering ineptitude he was called off 52 minutes later and his contract was cancelled after 14 days. It then transpired Weah never recommended the player — and claims not to know him — and Dia had failed to impress with trials at First Division Port

Vale or Portsmouth or Second Division Gillingham and Bournemouth. Port Vale showed him the door after one reserve match.

Dia has played for Senegal and for a German second division side, but never played for PSG and has never even been to Italy. Souness said: "I have not met George Weah but I have heard his voice on TV and radio and the man on the phone sounded similar. I don't feel I have been duped in the slightest because that's the way the world is these days."

Dia did make his mark this weekend — scoring for Minor League Gateshead in a 5-0 win over Bath in front of 400 fans.

Dia said afterwards: "I have been made to look a con-man, it's not true. I do know George Weah, but I am certainly not his best mate. I employed an agent when I came to England, and he is the con-man. He must have been calling all these clubs pretending to be George." Dia has still not given up hopes of a league career. This week he is due to have trials at Shrewsbury and Carlisle.

## Prize money proves an incentive for swimmers

ROSTOCK, Germany (R)

Sandra Voelker and Johanna Sjöberg enjoyed a lucrative record-breaking weekend at the inaugural European Sprints and Short-Course Swimming Championships.

European swimming's governing body LEN offered prize money for the first time at one of its championships and officials believe this could be the way to raise the profile of the sport.

The money — 5,000 marks (\$3,420) for a European record — was relatively modest in comparison with the vast financial rewards offered in golf and tennis but was none the less welcome.

"The prize money for records is a special incentive. The shops should be pleased because I haven't bought any Christmas presents yet," Voelker joked after setting her second European mark.

Voelker does promotional work for the sportswear company which sponsored these four-day championships, though her earnings do not match the millions garnered from endorsements by her high-profile German rival Franziska Van Almsick.

Voelker, who gained three medals at the Atlanta Olympics, is a full-time swimmer. "I am a professional because I don't do anything else," she said.

Her coach, Dirk Lange, said: "There are only a few swimmers, like Sandra, who can live from the sport. I think swimming will go in a similar direction to athletics."

Voelker, 22, shattered the absent Van Almsick's European 100 metres freestyle short-course record and then bettered the mark the two of them shared for the 50 freestyle.

She also anchored Germany to a world best time in the women's 4x50 medley relay — her second relay gold — and triumphed in the 50 backstroke, an event she won in all four editions of the old European sprint championships.

Sjöberg, an 18-year-old Swede, restricted Voelker to five golds

by beating the German in the 50 and 100 metres butterfly and setting two European records in the process.

Germany topped the medals table with 14 golds, followed by Britain who collected four golds thanks to Mark Foster (50 butterfly and 50 freestyle) and Susan Rolph (100 and 200 individual medley).

Despite the absence of Alexander Popov, Michelle Smith and all Europe's other Olympic gold medalists, 1996 world best times were achieved in 19 of the 38 events.

"I don't doubt the event will establish itself within the international calendar," LEN General Secretary Harm Beyer said.

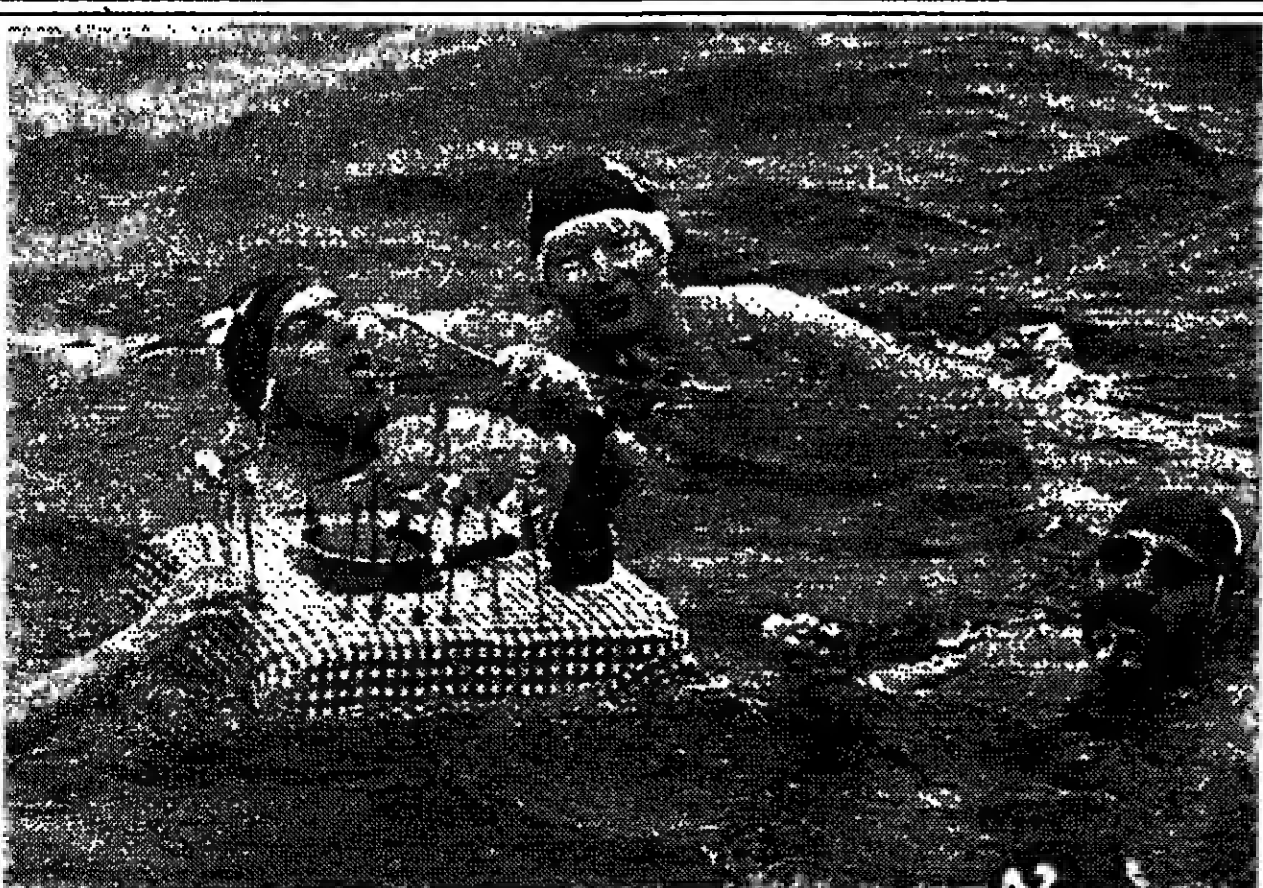
The championships, postponed from last April because the pool leaked, took their place in an extremely crowded calendar. The World Cup series, embracing two Asian and six European venues, unfolds in January and February with \$170,000 on offer in prize money and world records worth \$2,000.

The world short-course championships take place in Gothenburg in April, followed by the European long-course championships in Seville in August and the world long-course championships in Perth in January 1998.

German men's team coach Manfred Thiesmann believes high training levels and a succession of championship peaks are compatible. "If we want to stay interesting we cannot keep our noses under water the whole time training," he said.

But the World Cup series could suffer. "The leading (German) swimmers will take a limited part in the World Cup. The top ones will just compete in Gelsenkirchen (the German venue)," German women's team coach Achim Jedamsky said.

Voelker, like Foster, will spend three weeks in Australia next month. "I'll prepare in Perth for the world short-course championships and at the same time collect my first impressions for the world (long-course) championships there," she said.



SWIMMERS EAT A FONDUE DURING A FUN RACE: Swimmers eat a "fondue" during a fun race in Lake Geneva, Sunday. Following a 60 year old tradition, over 500 Swiss took part in a 200 metre race in water that was only 4 degrees Celsius (Reuters photo)

## Chelsea slump at Sunderland

LONDON (AFP)

Ruud Gullit's expensively assembled Chelsea were given a lesson in class from the honest journeymen of Sunderland as the Londoners crashed to a 3-0 defeat at Roker Park on Sunday.

The stylish Londoners have now gone five matches without a win since upsetting Manchester United nearly two months ago after succumbing to Peter Reid's buoyant Premiership newcomers.

An own goal by Michael

Duberry after half an hour set the mid-table wear-siders on their way, before second-half strikes from Kevin Ball and Craig Russell left Chelsea's all-stars with no hope of a result.

Russell, who coolly converted his third goal of the season with a deft finish, said: "It's a great result for us to beat Chelsea. They are a quality side with a number of great players."

Sunderland manager Reid, who recently invested some of his own money

in the ambitious club, said he thought his players were finally getting the breaks that their endeavour and spirit deserved.

Sunderland's first goal arrived when Russell's effort from the edge of the box deflected wildly off Duberry's behind before spinning into the back of the net.

And Reid acknowledged his good fortune, saying: "OK, we got a break with the first goal but we have been unlucky recently — so I think we were owed a

slice of luck like that. "We then played some really good stuff and never let Chelsea settle. I can tell you that I am a very bappy chappie," he added.

The match was effectively decided two minutes after the break when Ball threw himself on to the end of Michael Gray's superb whipping cross to power an unstoppable header past Chelsea's Norwegian goalkeeper Frode Grodas.

## Bayern warn Scholl about off-field antics

BONN (R)

Bayern Munich midfielder Mehmet Scholl faced possible censure from his club on Monday after reports alleged he was involved in a nightclub brawl. The German international midfielder was quoted as saying he had behaved badly recently and said that both team manager Uli Hoeness and vice-president Karl-Heinz Rummenigge had talked with him about the incidents.

"I have been behaving rather poorly," Scholl was quoted in the Munich daily TZ. "They (Hoeness and Rummenigge) both really chewed me out."

Rummenigge said Scholl has been warned and if he did not change his ways, "the club knows what it will have to do."

"We knew it would be a difficult year for Mehmet after the European Cup," Rummenigge reportedly told one paper. "Not only because of his private problems. But the way he has been acting during the injury break is unworthy of FC Bayern Munich."

Scholl's domestic problems have been publicised frequently in the German media. His wife left him in early October, taking their infant son with her when she moved in with a new boyfriend.

Scholl, one of the most outspoken players in the Bundesliga, was involved in an on-field altercation with Borussia Dortmund striker Stephane Chapuisat last year. Scholl took a swipe at Chapuisat after the Swiss forward struck him in the back of the legs.

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# Education is not simply an acquisition of knowledge but key to a better future of peace and development — Crown Prince

Prince Hassan delivers the prestigious 'Frank Klassen Lecture' at opening of world assembly of International Council on Education for Teaching

By Francesca Ciriaci  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Education is the key for a future of peace, economic development, respect for human rights, and protection of the environment, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan said Monday.

Rather than reduce education to a mere acquisition of information, governments and educators should promote education as a process aimed at stimulating thinking skills and critical approaches and encouraging a sympathetic understanding of religious, ethnic and cultural differences among the young, the Crown Prince said.

Delivering the prestigious 'Frank Klassen Lecture' at the 43rd world assembly of the International Council on Education for Teaching (ICET), which convened here on Monday, the Crown Prince stressed that teachers today bear the onerous responsibility of shaping the leaders, scientists, and citizens of the 21st century.

Only if the children of today are educated to "cooperative problem-solving and consensual decision-making," they will be men and women of peace tomorrow, he said.

The ICET meeting in Amman is held under the patronage of His Majesty King Hussein and attended by Minister of Education Abdullah Ensour, Minister of Education Munther Masri, ICET President Nelly Aleotti Maia and ICET Executive Director Sandra Klassen.

Prince Hassan called on

representatives from universities, colleges, ministries of education and educational associations from all over the world to adjust the structures of the teaching process to the "changing needs of a changing world."

Conventional schools and classrooms have to be transformed into "dynamic creative environments that provide for constructive interpersonal interactions, cooperative problem-solving and consensual decision-making," the Crown Prince said in a strong appeal to over 400 delegates.

The Middle East region, the "cradle of great civilisations and a fount of inspiration for the creative forces of mankind," witnesses a continuous confrontation between "forward-looking forces leading the way towards a global society and a global economy and other groups remaining within the cycle of violence that has plagued the region for far too long."

"We must not allow the forces of darkness to dictate the region's agenda. Universal education is a powerful force for positive change," the Crown Prince told the illustrious gathering, which includes a 34-member Israeli delegation including Arab-Israelis.

Stressing the role the "art of education" can play in peace-making and peace-building, the Crown Prince stated that "schooling must generate teaching-learning processes that facilitate the development of critical thinking tempered by humanitarian values as well as scientific and artistic cre-



activity, social responsibility and effective communications skills."

"The educational environment must be conducive to promoting such personal characteristics as a positive self-concept, self-confidence, tolerance for divergent views, understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural values, beliefs and social practices, sensitivity to the feelings of others and, above all, respect for human rights, freedom, dignity and respect for the integrity of the global environment and ecology," he said.

The Crown Prince suggested the main lines for a global school reform in view of the world's changing features and needs.

The 21st century's world, characterised by "shrinking space, information super-highways, mind-boggling multimedia technologies and biotechnologies whose yet unknown potential offers prospects which are as awesome as they are thrilling," demands "drastic changes" in the education system.

The future citizens will need "innovative teaching and learning methodologies and alternative education delivery systems tailored to fit the actual individual needs of various types of learners," the Crown Prince said.

Noting that too often, while focusing on thinking skills, feelings and emotions, though crucial to the development of the students' interpersonal communication and social skills, are overlooked, the Crown Prince urged the educators not to overlook "the complex relationships between thinking and feeling, intellect and emotions."

Speaking about Jordan's case, he pointed out that by 1990 the Kingdom had achieved enrollment rates of 98 and 80 per cent for children aged up to 12 and between 12 and 18 respectively.

Furthermore, the compulsory schooling age was extended from 15 to 16 in 1990, under the Jordanian educational reform plan, while the current student/teacher ratio is 20, compared to 30 for the world and 18 for the industrial countries.

"Jordan spends 14 per cent of its budget — more than 4.5 per cent of its gross national product — on education," the Crown Prince told the delegates.

However, a high national population growth rate and exogenous factors such as the waves of refugees the Kingdom has hosted from the various wars in the Middle East are major problems facing the Jordanian education system, the Crown Prince said.

"The government is continuously balancing between restructuring its economy and improving services to its population, including the refugees who also enjoy the state subsidies," he said.

In recognition to his "outstanding leadership in education" and his "fundamental role in initiating and sustaining education reforms in Jordan," Prince Hassan, an internationally renowned intellectual and writer, was awarded by ICET the prestigious "Distinguished Fellow Award."

The same award was conferred by Dr. Maia to ICET President-elect and Bahrain's Ambassador to France Ali Mohammed Fakhro.

Dr. Fakhro, who is also former minister of education and health, received the award in recognition of his contribution to develop education in Bahrain and reduce the illiteracy rate in the Gulf state from 20 to eight per cent in only 10 years, Dr. Klassen said.

The six-day ICET world assembly, focused on "Teacher Education and School Reform," will provide the world's leading education practitioners, scholars, administrators and policy-makers with an opportunity to examine and discuss national and international research, programmes and strategies aimed at enabling teachers to respond effectively to development needs.

"We hope that the various debates will be translated into concrete suggestions which all countries can implement," to reach the goal of "education for all," the Crown Prince concluded.

## Egypt could recall envoy to Israel over peace process freeze

HERZLYIA (Agencies) — The Egyptian ambassador to Israel, Mohammad Bassiuni, has raised the possibility of his recall to Cairo and other reprisals against Israel because of the freeze in the peace process.

"I am not threatening you, but it would not be only this (his recall)," Mr. Bassiuni told reporters Sunday night at his residence in the suburb of Herzlyia, north of Tel Aviv.

"Not moving means a deterioration in the region," he said. "Many things can happen. You know where it starts. You don't know where it ends."

The Egyptian ambassador added that he hopes "the Israeli government will move forward and implement the agreement (with the Palestinians)," Mr. Bassiuni also described Egypt as the "key to the solution."

Dore Gold, an advisor to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, visited Egypt last week and is scheduled to make another trip to Cairo this week to discuss Egypt's role in efforts to relaunch the peace process, officials said.

The officials said that Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai is to visit Egypt on Wednesday to brief Egyptian officials on the status of the Hebron talks.

Israel's new ambassador to Egypt Zvi Mazel took up his post on Monday at a time when relations between the two countries are strained over the deadlock in the Middle East peace process.

"Mr. Zvi Mazel arrived here Sunday night and he takes office today," a spokesman for the Israeli embassy in Cairo said.

Mr. Mazel, a career diplomat, headed the Africa desk at the Israeli foreign ministry before his appointment at the end of October to replace ambassador David Sultan.

Mr. Sultan's job was vacant for more than two months as the Israeli government tried to find a replacement for the former ambassador who had repeatedly complained of being isolated in Cairo.

Relations between Egypt and Israel — which signed a peace treaty in 1979 — have soured recently with Cairo blaming Israel for the stalemate in the Arab-Israeli peace process.

## Former U.S. secretaries of state criticise Israel

TEL AVIV (Agencies) —

Three former U.S. secretaries of state and five other former American officials have urged Israel in a letter to refrain from expanding Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

"We write because we are concerned that unilateral actions, such as the expansion of settlements, would be strongly counterproductive to the goal of a negotiated solution," said the letter, addressed to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office and dated Dec. 14.

"We, therefore, urge you as prime minister of the state of Israel, just as we also urge all on the Arab side, not to take unilateral actions that would preclude a meaningful negotiated settlement and a comprehensive and lasting peace," said the letter, a copy of which a Netanyahu spokesman faxed to Reuters.

The letter was signed by former secretaries of State James Baker, Lawrence Eagleburger and Cyrus Vance along with former senior government officials Zbigniew Brzezinski, Frank Carlucci, Brent Scowcroft, Richard Fairbanks and Robert Strauss.

Mr. Netanyahu's communications director David Bar Ilan said in response that most of the letter's signatories were not known as friends of Israel.

"These eight people were known as not the most friendly to Israel to say the least... Israel's real friends not only refused to sign this letter but are expressing their support for our policies all the time," Mr. Bar Ilan told Israel's army radio.

He said former secretaries of state George Shultz and Henry Kissinger refused to add their names to the letter.

## Two Palestinians jailed for 20 years for London blast

LONDON (AFP) — A

Palestinian man and woman convicted of plotting a bombing campaign after attacks on the Israeli embassy and a Jewish charity centre here in July 1994, were jailed for 20 years on Monday.

The Old Bailey court in central London also recommended that Jawad Botmeh, 28, and Samar Alami, 30, should be deported at the end of their sentences.

They were found guilty last week of plotting to bomb Jewish targets in Britain in a bid to sabotage the Middle East peace process. They were also found guilty of possession of weapons and explosives.

Two car bombs, on successive days on July 26 and 27, 1994, rocked the Israeli embassy in central London and a Jewish charity centre in north London, causing several million dollars of damage. There were no deaths in either attack, but about 20 people were lightly wounded.

The convicted Palestinian pair were not linked directly to the blasts.

The prosecution had told the court that Botmeh and Alami were members of a Palestinian group called in Britain which believed Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat "was misguided in his attempts to come to an accommodation with Israel."

The two had pleaded that

they had been experimenting with explosives not for use in Britain, but only in the Palestinian territories.

Defence lawyer Michael Mansfield, said the bombs were intended to be "symbolic" for use "against symbolic targets."

But the defence was rejected by Judge Justice Garland who said the two were guilty of "terrorist acts — of waging war in London which caused many millions of pounds of damage and could have caused death or serious injury."

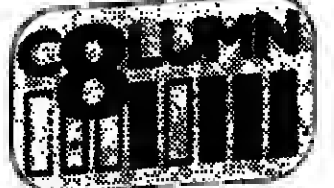
"I cannot regard this case as being solely directed at property — like a fire-bombing of a department store when it is closed or an office out of hours."

"I do accept there was some attempt to reduce the risk of loss of life — but a grave risk nevertheless remained."

The judge did accept however, that the two who both hold degrees from British universities, were not part of an Islamic militant group.

Another man and a woman also charged over the campaign, were freed earlier in the two-month trial.

Police are still searching for a woman aged between 40 to 50 who was seen hurrying away from the Israeli embassy on July 26, 1994 just a few minutes before the bomb went off.



Stallone to move to London

LONDON (AFP) —

U.S. actor Sylvester Stallone intends to move to London to give his daughter a better education in a safer environment, the Sun quoted him as saying. The tough hero of the Rambo and Rocky movies also confessed that he had gone "as soft as a cream puff," following last month's heart operation on three-month-old Sophia Rose. "I want my daughter to be safe and to have the best possible education and she just won't get that in the states," Stallone, 50, said. "My home town of Miami is beautiful — but has become extremely dangerous." A private education in Britain would give Sophia Rose "the best opportunities in the best surroundings," and would be good for his work, too, Stallone said.

## Clinton falls to his knees

WASHINGTON (AFP) —

A slick spot on President Bill Clinton's jogging path along the Potomac River sent him and a Secret Service agent sprawling Sunday, but both men quickly dusted themselves off and finished up their 30-minute jog. Clinton, who fell to his knees despite the agent's attempt to break his fall, was fine.

"Actually, he was more concerned with tracking mud into the White House than anything else," a White House spokeswoman told the Washington Post.

Bejart ballet pays tribute to ex-colleagues

LAUSANNE (AFP) —

French choreographer Maurice Bejart's new ballet, a tribute to his former star dancer Jorge Donn and singer Freddie Mercury, who both died of AIDS, received prolonged applause Sunday at its first public showing here.

Bejart's Swiss-based company, in white costumes designed by Versace, performed against a stark black and white set to music that included 18 items by Mercury's group Queen and Four by Mozart, mingling humour with more serious reminders of death. The choreographer, who celebrates his 70th birthday on Jan. 1, said the theme was one of joy, neither sinister nor defeatist. "It is not a ballet about AIDS but about youth, hope and people who died young," he said. Donn, an Argentinian, and Mercury, from Britain, were both 45 when they died in 1990 and 1991 respectively.

Hong Kong chicken wings take flight

HONG KONG (AFP) —

Hong Kong police Monday were trying to figure out why a hard-working gang of crooks made off with five container-loads of frozen chicken wings from a local wharf. The haul — hardly the easiest of goods to sell on the black market — was taken late Sunday after the thieves tied up the watchman on a barge, brought up another vessel and transferred the five refrigerated containers onto it. The wings are worth 2.5 million Hong Kong dollars (nearly \$300,000).

## Ross urges continued faith in Middle East peace process

U.S. envoy admits Jordan did not get promised economic prosperity but a positive atmosphere is being created

By Daphne Barak  
Special to the Jordan Times

WASHINGTON — Dennis Ross, the U.S. special coordinator for the Middle East, admitted in an interview here this week that many gaps remained in the search for an Arab-Israeli settlement but cautioned against losing faith in the peace process.

The U.S. official, who is expected to be reappointed by new U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright when her appointment is confirmed by Congress, said that while the Israelis and the Palestinians "have yet to learn to trust each other," he was confident that the two sides would soon reach an agreement on Israeli troops redeployment from Hebron.

On the other hand, Mr. Ross said, it was difficult to say whether the mood in the region could tolerate the tension that has arisen following the stalemate in the peace talks.

"The Jordanians, for example," said Mr. Ross,

"were promised a much better economic situation... That has not happened yet. I think that when the economic prosperity is felt, everybody will feel much better."

The U.S. official said that despite the problems a positive atmosphere is being created in the region, citing as an example the convening of the Middle East and North Africa economic conference in Cairo last month.

But five years after the beginning of the peace negotiations in Madrid, Mr. Ross said the U.S. is still trying to push the Palestinians and the Israelis to sit together and negotiate, pointing out that the two sides have yet to "learn to trust each other."

Mr. Ross expressed hope that the stalled negotiations over Israeli troops' redeployment from Hebron will be sealed "soon" but warned that the two sides have to overcome their mutual mistrust.

Meanwhile, a high-ranking American official also

said there were "small problems" rather than a one major problem delaying the conclusion of a deal on Hebron. But he said that once a deal on Hebron is reached, "every thing will be back on route."

The official pointed out that the Hebron deal, once concluded, will be the first one between the Palestinians and the new Israeli government which took office in June.

The official said the negotiations did not start from scratch after the election of Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister of Israel because they proceeded on the basis of the "Hebron guidelines" which were agreed upon between the Palestinians and the previous Labour government in Israel.

The official said that logistical and "emotional" differences are delaying the negotiations on Hebron but stressed that not many gaps remain.

The official, who asked not to be named, described

as unrealistic the "Lebanon-first" option which the Israelis have suggested as a framework for peace talks with Lebanon.

But the U.S. official was pessimistic about the prospects of restarting the Israeli-Syrian negotiations, saying "it will take time" before the two sides renege each other in peace talks.

The official said that negotiations over occupied Jerusalem are supposed to start in May 1999, but emphasised that date was a target date and not a deadline.

Meanwhile, the official said, the U.S. policy is not to talk about the issue because the "nature of the negotiations is to deal with each problem when the sides are prepared to deal with it."

The official said that there is no alternative to trying to push the peace process forward, adding that "fanatics from both sides cannot stop the process; only disturb it."

## Syria urges Palestinians to end talks with Israelis

DAMASCUS (AFP) — The official Syrian press on Monday called on Arabs and the international community to exert more pressure against Israel and urged the Palestinians to stop negotiating with the Jewish state.

"Arabs must set an example against Israel's intransigence by taking specific measures such as cancelling the normalisation (of relations) with Israel by some (countries) and stopping negotiations between the Palestinians and the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu," Tishrin said.

The Middle East peace process has been deadlocked since Netanyahu's rightwing administration came to power in June.

"The Israeli government is exploiting the continuation of talks and normalisation to deceive the world about its aggressive intentions," the newspaper said.

Tishrin also said that halting western arms sales as well as American and European financial aid to Israel could contain its "aggressive and provocative" policy.

## Kofi Annan declares he is not 'America's man'

CAIRO (AFP) — U.N. Secretary-General elect Kofi Annan of Ghana denied being "America's man" in statements published Monday and said his priorities will include convincing the United States to pay its debt to the United Nations.

"I believe it is important to work with the United States, the only superpower in the world today. The United

Nations needs the United States and we cannot be effective without them," Mr. Annan told the Arab daily Al Hayat.

"It is important to work constructively with the United States to convince Congress that it must pay up its debt otherwise the Americans will be upsetting friends and foes alike," said Mr. Annan, currently serving as under secretary-gen-

eral for peacekeeping operations.

Immediately after his nomination last week, Mr. Annan called on the United States to pay its \$1.3 billion debt to the United Nations.

The diplomat, who is poised to succeed Egyptian diplomat Boutros Ghali as the next U.N. chief in January stressed however that "a world controlled by the United States is not the

world each country seeks."

Mr. Annan, 58, also denied press reports suggesting he was "America's man."

"I consider this sad and frankly speaking quite upsetting."

Everyone who knows me knows that I am independent and free and nobody's man," Mr. Annan said. He said his political priorities will be to "solve some

of the main crises in Africa, namely around the Great Lakes area, the civil wars in Afghanistan and in Angola."

Mr. Annan also said he will pursue Mr. Ghali's policies on Iraq which led to the implementation this month of an oil-for-food deal, saying this was the "correct path" to ease the hardships of the Iraqi people.